

ASTD Training Basics Series

GOMUNICATION

JUDY JENINGS LINDA MALCAK

A Complete, How-to Guide to Help You:

Connect With and Influence Your Audience

Become a Think-On-Your-Feet Trainer

Present With Authority and Listen Effectively

SASTD Press

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About the *Training Basics* Series

STD's *Training Basics* series recognizes and, in some ways, celebrates the fast-paced, ever-changing reality of organizations today. Jobs, roles, and expectations change quickly. One day you might be a network administrator or a process line manager, and the next day you might be asked to train 50 employees in basic computer skills or to instruct line workers in quality processes.

Where do you turn for help? The ASTD *Training Basics* series is designed to be your one-stop solution. The series takes a minimalist approach to your learning curve dilemma and presents only the information you need to be successful. Each book in the series guides you through key aspects of training: giving presentations, making the transition to the role of trainer, designing and delivering training, and evaluating training. The books in the series also include some advanced skills such as performance and basic business proficiencies.

The ASTD *Training Basics* series is the perfect tool for training and performance professionals looking for easy-to-understand materials that will prepare non-trainers to take on a training role. In addition, this series is the perfect reference tool for any trainer's bookshelf and a quick way to hone your existing skills. The titles currently planned for the series include:

- ▶ Presentation Basics (2003)
- ► Trainer Basics (2003)
- ► Training Design Basics (2003)
- ► Facilitation Basics (2004)
- ► Communication Basics (2004)
- ▶ Performance Basics (2004)
- ► Evaluation Basics (2005)
- ▶ Needs Assessment Basics (2005).

Preface

communication is as old as the hills and as fresh as your next conversation. It's the way humans define their unique way of connecting, as in, "We are really communicating!" or conversely, "I absolutely cannot communicate with that person!" The act (or the art) of human communication is so all-encompassing that a book about communication skills is a bit daunting. In fact, the topic itself usually consumes at least one entire aisle at any large book store . . . if not more.

For that reason, this book—Communication Basics—does not purport to be the final word on communication skills. Instead, we (the authors) are trying to give you (the trainer) a head start on the skills that we have learned and hope will help you listen to the participants and really hear them . . . or talk with the participants and be truly understood. To that end, we give you many techniques to try and steps to take to fine-tune your communication skills. Our goal is to set you on the path, but it's your job to start walking.

With so much information about communication already in print, why did we want to write yet another book? Basically, we think that our combined training experiences in various situations and environments over the years give us a unique perspective—one that will be advantageous to you. Our premise is that because different organizational cultures and subcultures respond to various communication styles, it's a good idea to have several appropriate styles in your back pocket.

When you are training or giving a presentation, the skills we offer can enhance the way you interact with your audience. In fact, the greater your range of styles, the greater the chance is that you will reach the desired results with any group under any situation.

Furthermore, we all have comfort zones that are reinforced every time we repeat behaviors. Those behaviors may work for us on a regular basis. However, when a Preface

trainer encounters a group whose cultural backgrounds vary from the trainer's normal style, the trainer must be able to adapt to the group.

By reading this book, going through the exercises, and applying its principles you can practice behaviors that will make you a more flexible and effective trainer. So start walking, experiment a little, take some risks, and enjoy the journey!

Icons to Guide You

This book has plenty to offer in the way of content that can help you every day. We hope you will find it appropriate enough to keep as a reference, and on days when you're feeling frustrated, you'll pour yourself a cup of coffee or a cool drink and sit back for review. But, just so you don't miss all the best parts, some icons will alert you to key features of the book. Here are the ones you'll find throughout all of the *Training Basics* series:



What's Inside This Chapter

Each chapter opens with a short summary that serves as a quick reference to the chapter contents. Use this section to identify the information in the chapter and, if you wish, skip ahead to the material that is most useful to you.



Think About This

These are helpful tips that you can put in your back pocket to pull out when needed in preparation for or during facilitation.



Basic Rules

These rules cut to the chase. They are unequivocal and important concepts for facilitators.



Noted

This icon flags sections with greater detail or an explanation about a concept or a principle. Sometimes it is also used for a short, productive tangent.



Getting It Done

The final section of each chapter supports your ability to take the content of that chapter and apply it to your situation. Sometimes this

Preface

section contains a list of questions for you to ponder, sometimes it is a self-assessment tool, and sometimes it is a list of action steps you can take to improve your skills and help increase the chances for participant success.

Finally

We hope you find our scenarios, experiences, and ideas worthwhile. Our goal is to help you become a more successful trainer and shorten your learning curve in the process. We would love to hear your personal stories. Tell us what happened when you tried on new communication behaviors. Please let us know what worked for you and what you learned in the process. In this way, we can all grow together.

Last, we offer a debt of thanks to our families, the arenas in which we first cut our communication teeth and in which we continue to develop.

Judy Jenings Linda Malcak July 2004

Communicating From the Heart



What's Inside This Chapter

Here, you'll see how to:

- ▶ Use this book to help you connect with your participants
- ▶ Identify whether you are teaching from the heart
- ▶ Locate material in the book using a chapter-by-chapter outline.

Who Cares About Learning—and Why?

Think back over all the teachers you've had during your life. How many stand out? What do you remember about them? Do you remember how they looked, how they stood in front of your class, how they interacted with your class? Did you look forward to class time? Did you enjoy preparing for their course? Most important, how many of those teachers or instructors had a profound influence on your life, on your learning, on your zeal for their subject? If you're like us, you remember only a select few.

Now think about all those teachers again but from a different perspective. What do you think they thought they were doing? Quite probably, they thought they were

teaching, molding minds, creating a love for their subject. In fact, most people who become trainers do so because they wish to have an impact, share knowledge, create a lust for learning. So, assuming that's the case, why didn't their initial intentions translate into your long-term result? Even more important, how can you become a trainer and instructor who will be remembered by your learners not just this week but perhaps for years to come? It all boils down to communication and how that communication occurs.

To get personal for a minute, if I had to answer my own question I'd say that I remember my second grade teacher, my freshman English teacher, my high-school government teacher, one or two college professors—and that's about it. They are a motley collection of individuals with a wide variety of teaching techniques and methods of interactions who shared two outstanding characteristics: They truly cared about me, and they cared about their subject. Note that this is a two-pronged idea: their zeal for the students was coupled with a zeal for the subject. Let's look at each one.

Zeal for the Students

My memorable few didn't just care about the class as a group, but about *me*. What I learned and how I could apply that learning over the long run were both deeply important to each of these teachers. They showed it, I knew it, and their caring made me care about myself and made me want to learn. Each of those people connected with me as an individual, and in some way I carry with me the strength of those connections to this day.

Zeal for the Subject

Caring isn't enough. Substantial, current content must be passed along in an applicable way. Each of my memorable teachers had a zeal for their subject. They didn't just use the book, teach from the book, finish the book, and call it a successful course. They studied over and beyond what they needed to do for class. They integrated their knowledge into their lives, they were excited about it, and enthusiastic about it. That kind of enthusiasm is contagious because it communicates, it vibrates, and its authenticity engages learners and keeps them interested.

Here's an example: One of the courses I took during college was statistics, which was taught in the education department. I had taken statistics before in another

department, and although I understood the concepts, the field of statistics was never more than a series of senseless formulas to remember, apply, and spit back. You'd think that the second run-through in a different arena (this time education) would have made it sink in. Nope. The subject for me remained a series of meaningless formulas, applications, and so forth.

About 15 years later, though, I was developing two training programs for a major producer of truck engines. The programs were for certified quality engineers, and the topics were basic probability and statistics, statistical design of experiments, and regression analysis. For the first time, the application of this subject (statistics and a few permutations) made sense to me. The engine manufacturer used statistics to ensure that the engine parts had a predictable life expectancy and that truckers were not left stranded with loads of product out in the middle of nowhere. Suddenly that meaningless (to me) subject had a face—a meaning—and the concepts became memorable.

I have been able to apply the concepts of statistics ever since. How much better it would have been if the original instructors would have made this course come alive for me. Putting a real-life application and a need to know on what could have been strictly theoretical makes the student care because the instructor cares!

In short, memorable teachers are masters at making their subjects live for (and later in) their students. They aim for excellence and risk investing themselves and their efforts in the lives of the students sitting in their classrooms.

The best trainers are like this, too. They take time to connect with the learners who are in their classes, workshops, and seminars. They invest their energy, thereby ensuring that learners get the training they need and can put it to use the next day on the job. Like the life-changing teachers already mentioned, these trainers, too, are teaching from the heart. Why is this so vital to communication? It's vital because communication is more than a few techniques, no matter how well mastered. Communication is about connecting. In fact, it's all about connecting.



Basic Rule 1

If you don't communicate that you care, you won't communicate.

So Why Don't We Do It?

All right, so if it's such a great idea, why don't many trainers really communicate with their learners? After all, most trainers would rather be remembered than forgotten. Most people like to succeed, and most trainers like to encourage others to do the same thing. So why don't we? What gets in the way?

The answer is that many things get in the way, some of which fall into the nebulous category of techniques. We'll consider those barriers later in this book. The next chapter attacks the biggest bugaboo of all, the monster that gobbles up our energy, leaving precious little for the learners. That monster's name is *fear*.

Here's a Preview

Before you jump into the next chapter, why not take a moment to get an overview of this book? Your success as a communicator will determine your success as a trainer and purveyor of knowledge. Here's how this book will help you expand your skills and increase the chances of success both for you and your participants. Here's a summary of the 12 chapters in *Communication Basics*:

- 1. "Communicating From the Heart" gives you an overview of the book. It establishes the basis upon which all effective training communication rests—zeal for the students (learners) and zeal for the subject.
- 2. "Tame the Fear Monster" presents the single biggest factor that often stops trainers from communicating effectively: fear. The bad news is that fear can becomes such an ogre that it colors everything we do in the classroom. The really great news is that fear comes from within and, therefore, is under your control. You can make those butterflies in your stomach fly in formation, and this book shows you how.
- 3. "Attitudes Speak Louder Than Words" offers you an opportunity to answer the question, "Why are you here?" What values brought you to the training arena, and how can you communicate those values most effectively to the participants in your workshops?
- 4. "Trainer, Know Thyself" reveals what trainers need to know in order to use personal style in a way that brings the learners into the learning equation. In this chapter, you'll consider why you are training, what you want to accomplish, what you want your learners to walk away with, and how to make them want to come back for more.