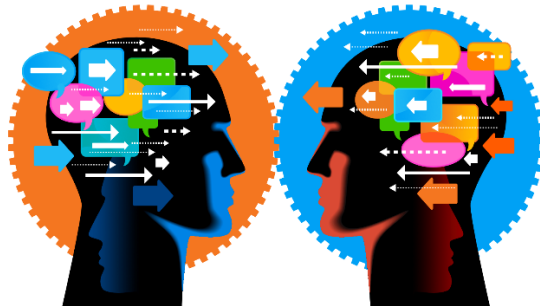


The Fast-Track Communication Program

CULTURESTRATEGY



CULTURESTRATEGY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOALS

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

VOICE, BODY LANGUAGE, AND WORDS

STRUCTURING THOUGHTS

ASSERTIVENESS

STORYTELLING FUNDAMENTALS

INTRODUCING YOURSELF WITH IMPACT

PRESENTING POWERFULLY

FACILITATION FUNDAMENTALS

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

CONCLUSION

Welcome to one of the biggest steps in your life!

GOALS

CULTURESTRATEGY

In week 1, we explore the foundation of who you are and what you want to create in the world. If you've been desiring more confidence and better communication in your life, the first step is to build true clarity.

Making progress requires 3 key elements:

1. A vision: A clear goal that you can visualize in your mind
2. A plan: A step by step strategy to achieve your goal
3. Consistent execution: Unstoppable day-to-day actions to carry out your plan

VERIFICATION

We have limited mind space and more and more distractions these days.

You have made an investment in this program. Do you commit to **MAKING YOUR COMMUNICATION A PRIORITY** for the next 3 months? Please write down your commitment.

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VISION PART 1

1. What are you **passionate** about? What do you love doing? Why?

2. On a scale of 1-10, how well do these passions **align** to your current career/income source?

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. What are your top 3 **skills**? What do people tell you you are naturally, uniquely good at?

1.

2.

3.

4. On a scale of 1-10, how well do these skills **align** to your current career/income source?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. What do you NOT enjoy doing? What are you not good at? How often do you find you need to do these things?

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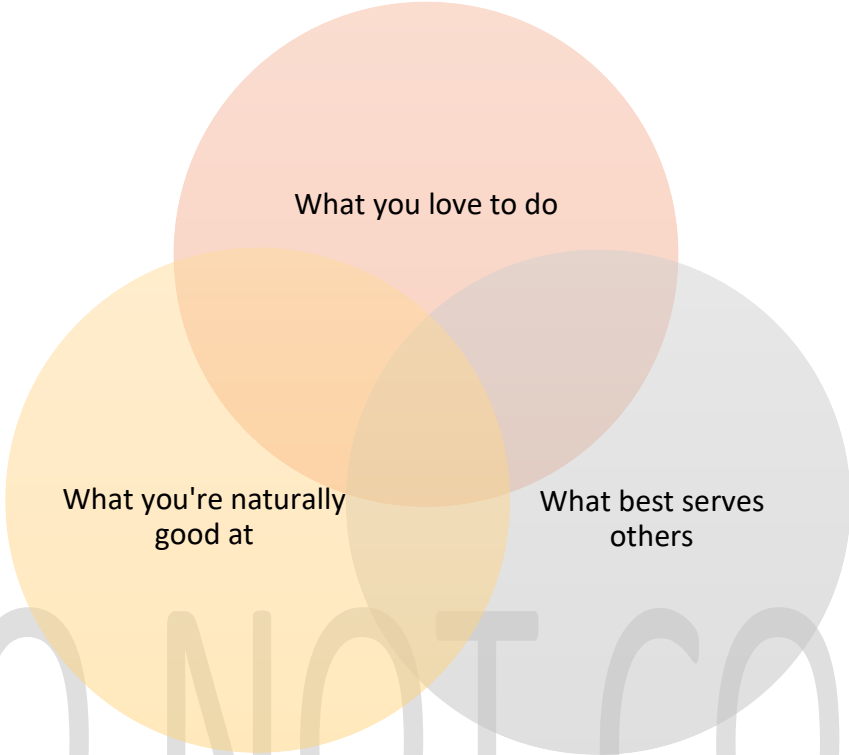
6. How can your skills and life passions **serve others**? Give 3 examples. If you don't know, you may need to do some research on this to find examples.

1.

2.

3.

7. What is your unique value to your company, or to society? What do they need and **what problems do you solve** for them? How is what you can do unique?



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What ideas come up at this point? Write them down here.

When thinking about what is most important to you in your career and life, **how would you rank the following from most important(1) to least important(6)?:**

1. **Admiration and Status** – You are driven by winning and being recognized for your contributions. It's important to you to feel highly respected. You may do best in a job that offers a lot of prestige and recognition, such as being a lead researcher or academic. If money is also very important to you, you might consider an executive leadership role within an organization.
2. **Security** – You are driven by having structure and a fixed plan, and you're not a big fan of sudden surprises or changes. You like to be clear on what you are expected to do and avoid ambiguity. You may be a naturally great organizer and planner. You do best in a job that has high job security, such as working for the government.
3. **Autonomy** – You are driven by freedom and independence. You want minimal directions or instructions from others – you'd rather chart your own path and see what you come up with. You may be an out of the box thinker and naturally innovative. You just hate being told what to do by others. You may be best suited to be a business owner or entrepreneur, or an intrapreneur within an organization, leading your own area.
4. **Community** -- You are driven by helping and interacting with others. You love to work in a team and collaborate with others towards a common goal. You dislike when you work with others who are less collaborative than you. There are many career choices suitable for someone like you, as long as there is high interaction and teamwork.
5. **Money** – You are driven by your income goals. You desire a certain lifestyle that only money can provide, so your goal is to maximize

your income, even if it means you might have to sacrifice other things in the short term. A lucrative career in finance or business would be a good match for you.

6. **Mission** – You are driven by making an impact on a macro scale. You feel strongly about changing the status quo and creating results. You want to accomplish something that makes a difference in some area of business or society. A career working in or leading a non-profit may be ideal for you, though there are many choices depending on your specific interests.

My rankings:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6

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VISION PART 2

Who is your **hero**, a person you look up to? Why? What **3 qualities** do you admire most about this person?

2. Envision yourself embodying these 3 qualities at **60 years old**. What would you have accomplished? Write down anything that comes to mind as a “must have.”

3. Next, envision your life just **5 years from today**. What do you see? Be as specific as possible. Where are you? Who else is there? What are you doing? What are you wearing? How is your hair? Most importantly, how do you feel?

4. Finally, close your eyes and just envision what your life looks like 12 months from today? Use your imagination, yet be as specific as possible.

- Where do you live?
- Who else is there?
- What does your bed look like? How do you feel when you wake up?
- What is the first thing you do?
- What are you doing during the day?

- You go to the ATM to take some cash out. What is the account balance you see on your receipt?

Set a timer on your phone for 5 minutes. Spend some time visualizing yourself achieving this vision and what your life would look like. No need to be “practical” right now - Let your imagination run. **Be as detailed as possible.**

What images come up? Write them down if you like.

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Why do we start things off with learning emotional intelligence? This is supposed to be a communication course!

The number one reason our leadership and communication often fail is due to a lack of emotional intelligence. This isn't necessarily our fault. We are conditioned by our families, by our society, and by our workplaces to give little importance to feelings in general.

As a result, for most of our day to day, we end up **suppressing what we feel** and keep ourselves busy with what we need to **do**.

This usually seems to work out for us – we are more productive and more efficient when we focus only on our rational minds and ignore everything else.

However, this strategy often backfires when it comes to **impacting others**. The reason is that **as we have evolved as a species, our communication has evolved**. It is no longer only about exchanging information, but it is also about evoking feeling in others, in order to build relationships and/or achieve certain goals.

When we want something from someone, whether it is their friendship, approval, money, a promotion, a raise, or anything else, it is important to be able to appeal to their emotions in some way. In order to do that, we also need to learn to understand and express our own emotions.

SELF-AWARENESS AND EXPRESSION

Stop for a moment and breathe. Notice what you feel right now. Maybe tired, maybe energetic, maybe intrigued, maybe stressed, maybe distracted. **Whatever it is, describe it in words, as best as you can.** Use detail in describing it – for example, if you're stressed, why? What triggered this feeling, if anything?

OTHER-AWARENESS

Great! Now, think of a person you wish you could **CONVINCE** of something. It can be anyone – a spouse, a colleague, a boss, a potential client. Try your best to describe in words how this person **FEELS** when they talk to you – comfortable? Frustrated? On guard? Skeptical? Why do you think that is?

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Try your best to describe in words what this person **WANTS** in general(not from you necessarily). What is this person's greatest desire?

EMPATHY AND CURIOSITY

Empathy and curiosity are two of the most powerful skills a leader can have.

Empathy is more than just understanding a person's feelings and point of view. Empathy is **communicating** that you understand. When you can communicate this, you win trust and respect quickly.

One tool for showing empathy is extremely simple. It's called **mirroring**. With this tool, you literally paraphrase what someone has shared with you.

For example:

Colleague: This task is taking way too long already and we're behind schedule.

You: I can tell you feel frustrated with the progress we're making on this, and I hear you.

Another powerful tool for winning trust and buy-in is **curiosity**.

Maybe you don't know quite how someone feels. Or you know, but you're not sure why they feel that way. You can use curiosity to better understand a person's point of view.

Example:

Colleague: This task is taking way too long and we're behind schedule.

You: I hear you. What do you think we should do differently at this point?

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VOICE, BODY LANGUAGE, AND WORDS

Our voice is one of our most powerful tools as humans. We use our voices to relay important information, persuade, and develop relationships.

Having a strong, firm, yet pleasant voice can work wonders for a leader. Some people naturally have one, while others can develop their voices through targeted exercises.

One strategy for voice and vocal delivery is to use our **stomach voices, rather than our upper chest / head voices**. The chest /head voice is a more superficial voice that originates in, you guessed it, the chest and head. The sound that comes from these areas is comparatively **smaller, softer, and sharper**.

Our stomach voices originate from our core. If we pay attention, we can feel the sound actually coming from this area of our body. This voice is **richer, broader, and more powerful** because it utilizes more of the body's power. It indicates confidence, certainty, and strength.

Another essential skill for communication is **voice modulation**. One of the key mistakes leaders make is focusing on content more than delivery, thus coming across monotone. This easily disengages audiences, no matter how interesting your content is!

Practice vocal exercises as often as you can to develop your voice.

Remember to pay attention to your breathing before, during, and after each exercise.

BODY LANGUAGE

The most important aspect of body language during communication is the eyes. As they say, eyes are the window to the soul. Eyes are what builds trust between people. When you look down or away, it sends an unconscious signal to your audience that you may not be trustworthy or authentic. Pay attention to looking people directly in the eyes when speaking to them to increase your impact.

When beginning a conversation or interaction, particularly with a new person, remember to relax your face and start with a smile, when appropriate. Your relaxed demeanor will evoke comfort and trust from the other person, which will lead to a more productive interaction.

Ensure your back is straight and not slouched or hanging back. If anything, try leaning in to people (not too close) to show that you're interested in what they have to say. A straight back with shoulders down indicates confidence and ease in the body, so whenever you remember, assume good posture.

Finally, keep an open stance. Try not to cross your legs or your arms too much, as this can indicate you're closed off to new ideas or haughty. When your arms are open and relaxed, it subconsciously shows people that you are an open, trustworthy person who is interested in engaging with them.

THE WORDS WE USE

Having a strong and varied vocabulary adds to your leadership capability. However, many academics and technical professionals can overdo it with the use of complex words.

A few things to be aware of with word usage are:

1. Try not to use the same word over and over again, unless you have to. Find synonyms or other ways of saying something.

Are there any words you find you use too much? What are some alternatives to these words you could try?

2. Use “big words” sparingly. There is no need to show off your verbal prowess to the point where people have a hard time keeping up with you and need to carry around a dictionary. Sometimes, communicating something simply in lay terms is the most effective way!

3. Words can actually **change feelings**, and thus are very powerful. That's why learning and using descriptive adjectives is a great way to develop your communication. Instead of saying something is “great”, saying it is “amazing” or “brilliant” evokes a different feeling of inspiration and positivity.

Think of how you can inject powerful words into your everyday speech.

INTONATION AND PAUSES

Just as important as the words we use are the pauses we include in our speech and the tones we speak in. Remember that our goal in communication is not only to relay information but to make people

feel something. In order to do that, we have to be engaging and dynamic.

These days, tons of things are vying for people's attention. Phones, apps, laptops, in addition to other people. How do we keep people engaged in what we're saying?

Through effectively using pauses and intonation. Rather than rambling on and on a topic, remember to watch your audience and ensure they're keeping up with you. Look for cues that they are **with you** as you speak, or if they seem distracted, switch things up quickly. You might add more emotion and tonality to your voice, or give your speech an air of suspense by pausing and then starting again. The most important thing is to practice and to watch your audience to ensure you are in tune with them.

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STRUCTURING THOUGHTS

Most people are not naturally structured thinkers. This means that when they get asked a question out of the blue, they don't naturally answer it in a very linear way. This can come across as "rambling," which quickly loses an audience. They can also end up using too many filler words, like "um" and "uh" – which arise mainly from nervousness of not being sure how to structure one's thoughts and use the right words.

Practice speaking your mind and sharing your views, by speaking out loud your answers to these questions and recording on your camera/phone. Try not to take more than a few seconds to prepare your responses (you don't need to write anything). See what your answer is like improvised, without any preparation. Keep your answers between 1-2 minutes, if you can – having a timer can be a good way to keep track.

How have you changed in the past 5 years?

Do you believe in extraterrestrial life? Why or why not?

What is an object you feel attached to? Why?

How do you think the world will be different in 10 years?

Now reflect: How do you feel about your answers and how you expressed yourself? What were your strengths? How could you improve?

This all comes down to practice with structuring your thoughts.

There are a few different structures you can use to answer a question.

One is to focus on one main point, state that point, tell a strong story around the point, and then end by stating the point again.

Example: *I've changed in the past 5 years by becoming more certain of what I want to do with my life. 5 years ago, I was confused and immature, and my lifestyle was so different. I would be partying 5 days a week, socializing all the time, and generally directionless. Today, I'm the opposite, and I spend my time towards achieving my goals. I think that's probably the biggest change for me in the last 5 years.*

Another is to give a “list” of 2 or 3 points, and bring them together in the end.

Example: *There are a few ways I've changed in the past 5 years. 1. I've become way more sure of what I want in my career 2. I care less what people think of me and more on what I think of myself and 3. I'm generally more careful about how I plan my money and finances. So overall, I'd say that I've matured a ton in the last 5 years.*

Try experimenting with both of these structures and seeing how they feel. Generally, there is one structure that you tend towards more than the other, and that's fine! That becomes part of your unique communication style.

Homework: Practice structuring your thoughts by picking some of the questions below to answer during the week, as well as taking opportunities at work or at home to answer questions using structured thinking. Record yourself and listen back when appropriate, and email to your coach if you'd like. Notice how many “ums” and filler words you use. One or two are ok!

1. *How have you spent the last year?*
2. *What do you believe is important for a happy life?*
3. *What makes you different from other people?*

4. *How do you feel about the democratic process?*
5. *Do you think marijuana should be legalized?*
6. *What are some of your favorite things to do?*
7. *What do you think is important for a good leader?*
8. *Where do you see yourself after you retire?*
9. *What excites you the most about the future?*
10. *Talk about your best friend. How would you describe this person?*

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ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness is about learning how to proactively ask for what you want, facing the possibility of rejection. Assertiveness is part of emotional intelligence, because it is essential to understand and balance the needs of others with our own needs when asking for something.

There are many ways to ask for what you want.

You can use data and facts, you can use stories and feelings, or you can use a combination. It is important to

- 1. Have a strong case for asking for what you want**
- 2. Appear balanced, bold, and prepared**
- 3. Have a backup request ready in case the answer is no!**

The most common area where people feel challenged with assertiveness is when asking for a higher salary or promotion at work.

Before asking, it is important to keep in mind the very real possibility of being told no. If the answer is no, you should have a backup “request” that you can follow up with.

One option you may try is:

“I’ve really enjoyed working here so far, and I hope you’ve felt happy with my work. I was wondering how you feel about putting me up for promotion this year?.....What would it take?”

If the answer is no, perhaps because you haven't worked at the company for long enough, you can gently counter by saying:

"I understand, though I don't necessarily think the policy is fair. I know that's not your fault. Could we at least discuss an x% raise?"

One key to assertiveness is to remain likeable and friendly throughout the communication. Being too strong-willed or taking a hard-line approach may appear aggressive and have the opposite effect of what you want. Balance firmness and confidence in your ask with an easygoing, positive demeanor.

STORYTELLING FUNDAMENTALS

This module will focus on developing the essential skill of storytelling. We'll start with exploring your personal story, but we'll continue to use this skill for a variety of different situations.

Storytelling is an immensely powerful and useful skill to have as a leader - stories have a unique ability to educate, inspire, connect people, and motivate action.

Make sure you are in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed before working on this. Close your eyes and spend some time reflecting on your overall vision and message.

Think about your life story – what brought you to where you are today? What were some of the unique parts of the journey, and what were the turning points? Bring to mind as much detail as you can - bring to mind colors, scents, feelings, and sounds. Imagine yourself in those situations again.

Write about the event(s) and details you remember:

Most people's lives are a series of ups and downs. Write out some of the main events/turning points you experienced to bring you to where you are.

A good story has a structure or skeleton that makes it most effective.

Context—Events/Turning Points---Strong Conclusion

So far, you've listed all the separate points/events in your life, and they probably have some kind of string, threading them together. However, where would you start your life story?

You might start by setting a context, if it's relevant. *"I grew up in northern California with my mother and 2 younger sisters, and so I've always been keenly aware of the struggles that are unique to women."* Think of a picture that could depict your context. Maybe it's a picture of a group of women holding hands. For me, it's a picture of 2 boats, with one foot in each of them as I was brought up in a hybrid Indian-American culture. Pictures offer us powerful metaphors for our stories that help to bring other people more deeply into our stories.

Your Context(image):

Your Context(written):

Next, what has been your unique life journey? What were the defining moments in your life so far – decision points or events that changed the course of your life in a big way? Life often presents us with challenges that are opportunities to grow and learn. Think of and draw some pictures that relay the challenging events/turning points in your life. See how you can include these images in your story!

Events/Turning points(images):

Events/Turning Points(written):

Finally, your story needs to have an ending that brings it all together, which will normally be your present day situation. How can you end your story strongly? A good way might be, *“And that brought me to where I am today, as a Director at (company), helping people (what you do), with a vision of (your future goal).”* Is there an image that can relay your strong ending, perhaps something related to your goal? If so, draw the picture here and see how you can include it in your story!

Your Strong Ending(Image):

Your Strong Ending(written):

Finally, let's put it all together. Your **Context—>Events/Turning points—>Strong ending**. Write out your story here, or on a separate page.

Take a look at your story. Does it seem complete? Are there any parts that seem missing?

Start speaking it out loud, as if you're narrating it to someone. You might record yourself speaking it. Listen back and see if you feel your story sounds engaging, interesting, and convincing.

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INTRODUCING YOURSELF WITH IMPACT

We use our skills in storytelling to continue with how we introduce ourselves to the world in an engaging way.

When you get asked the question "What do you do?", what do you usually say?

This can vary greatly from person to person. Generally we start with *saying "I'm a (role title) with (company)."*

When I used to work with Accenture, I would say *“I’m an organizational consultant with Accenture.”*

The problem was no one knew what exactly that meant. My brief answer also made it seem like I didn’t want to talk more about it.

Sometimes, using some humor to answer the question is a great way to go about it. Here is one example:

Example 1: *“I’m an organizational consultant aka road warrior with Accenture, which means I travel to different companies all week and help them solve their internal problems to make them more money than they already have. It keeps me pretty busy.”*

Or, you can make your job sound relevant by referring to recent news or current events.

Example 2: *I’m an organizational consultant with Accenture, so I help companies improve their operations and reduce risks. For example, lately I’ve been helping companies improve team performance and collaboration during COVID19 and remote working.*

Why might these intros work better?

- 1.They give more detail on what exactly I do as a “consultant”
2. The first one includes humor, which invites people to feel at ease with me and ask more questions

3.They use imagery to engage the listener– words like “road warrior,” “collaboration” create images in people’s minds, which makes my job seem more engaging

4. The second example, which refers to a current event, provides a concrete example of my work through something the listener already knows about/has heard about.

Now, try out your own introduction of yourself. How can you use humor, imagery, and examples to communicate about your work in a more engaging way?

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PRESENTING POWERFULLY

Did you know that presentation and public speaking are feared by 75% of Americans? If you fall into this statistic, know that you're not alone!

The key to powerful speech and presentation is to utilize skills in storytelling, structuring thoughts, and effective voice, words, and body language to convey a key message or messages. So start from the message – the main point of your presentation or speech. Ideally, you can distill this down to one thing. If you can't, ensure that there are **no more than 3 primary messages or takeaways**.

1. What is **the main message(s)** you'd like to share through this presentation?

2. You believe in this message for a reason. Why? What compelling data or information backs this up?

3. Now most importantly, what **stories** in your life give power to this message?

Great. Now, I want you to write down your top 3 strongest evidence points for this message. These are your talking points.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

An effective presentation can be boiled down largely to the **introduction and the conclusion**. First, make sure your introduction is engaging.

The mistake that many presenters make is jumping right into their talking points and factual details. Something akin to *“Hi everyone, today I’ll be*

presenting some information on (topic) and why I believe we should do _____.”

While this is an ok way to present, it is not nearly as engaging and impactful as it could be. One of the best ways to start a presentation is with a **story**.

This can be a story you heard, a story about someone you know, or best yet, a story about yourself.

Let's say for example you need to give a presentation to your team on why a certain technology change is being made.

You might tell a story directly related to the company, or even a personal story, if you want to be more creative.

Ex; “I think the most important lesson I learned from my father was that in order to stay relevant, I need to constantly adapt and adjust the way I work to the times. Well, I think our upcoming technology change is a great example of that.”

Another powerful way to start a presentation is by asking a question. This creates an interactive energy from the start, which “wakes the audience up” and ensures they are actively engaged.

Ex: “Who here has had issues with our x tool we’ve been using? Raise your hand.”

Do you have a presentation or speech coming up? Write down 3 ideas for your powerful introduction.

Your conclusion is the last thing that your audience hears, and so the more memorable and hard-hitting it is, the better!

The conclusion should be the point where you tie in everything you've said thus far and wrap it up with a nice big bow. Go back to your main message(s). How can you express it effectively and memorably?

There are many options for this. Some options are a story, a proverb, a powerful visual, or a deep reflection.

What you should NOT do is say something like *“Well, that’s all I have to say, thanks for listening.”*

Think of either your last presentation/speech or something you have coming up. Write down 3 ideas for a powerful ending.

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FACILITATION FUNDAMENTALS

As a leader, effective meeting facilitation is a must-have skill. Whether you are officially or unofficially leading a meeting, being able to keep a group of people on topic and focused towards an agenda is key.

More often than not, meetings go off track from the initial goal. People bring up new issues that can hijack the original topic, and before you know it, time is up.

You probably know how important it is to set an agenda for a meeting. If not, do it! Be sure the **agenda, purpose, and time allotments** for the meeting are clearly laid out and emailed in advance to participants.

Regardless of having this information, some attendees will be more outspoken than others and use the meeting towards their own agenda. If this looks like it's happening, you need to **politely yet firmly intervene**:

“I think we definitely need to discuss this but I want us to stick to our agenda for this meeting and follow up on it later.”

As a facilitator, your job is also to ensure that meetings are **inclusive of everyone’s input**. This means maintaining a collective awareness of the group. If you’ve asked for input and someone hasn’t spoken, your responsibility as facilitator is to invite that person to speak up. Remember that while some people are more outspoken than others, every attendee deserves to be heard. If it seems like someone is talking too much, take initiative as facilitator to politely cut them off and invite someone else to speak.

Example:

“Brian, before you continue - I want to make sure we’re getting to hear from everyone. Joan, I notice you haven’t said anything about this yet. Do you have anything you’d like to add?”

Be **proactive** as a facilitator to ensure the meeting’s goals are met!

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Conflict is a regular occurrence in most workplaces. Whether conflict is directed at you or you’re asked to facilitate through it, there are some key skills and points to remember.

1. Use your **emotional intelligence skills**. Your mind may bias you to only see one side of the story: the side you agree with. However, emotional intelligence is about understanding multiple perspectives through empathy and curiosity. Try to see how each party’s point of view may be valid in its own way.

2. Ground the conversation towards a **common goal**. Rather than focusing on the differences, focus the discussion on what both parties want. To complete a project successfully? To develop a great product? Whatever it is, reorient the conversation to that goal.
3. **Mirror** both sides of the conflict. Express your understanding of both “your side” and the “other side.” You might even bring in your understanding of the feelings associated. “I can understand you must be really frustrated”
4. Ask a “how” or “what” question to encourage creativity. “How can we solve this?” “What can we do so that both of our goals are met?”

Finally, as hard as it may seem, remember not to take conflict personally. More often than not, conflict arises from faulty processes or tools and not due to any one person. It is important to approach conflict with an attitude of **collaboration, rather than competition.**

CONCLUSION

Communication is not an easy thing to master. As you have learned, there are many nuances and elements to communication that need to be worked on, practiced, and applied regularly in order to keep improving.

There is no such thing as a perfect communicator, but the more we practice these skills and stay conscious of how we communicate, the more adept we become.

When we put our minds to improving our communication, the payoff is **limitless**: we become exponentially more successful, both professionally and in our personal relationships!

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