



ASBO INTERNATIONAL

SCHOOL BUSINESS MINUTE

WOW THE CROWD AND CONNECT WITH THOSE YOU SERVE: *How to Become an Exceptional Business Communicator*

Connect with Your Audience's Emotions

Effective communication skills are invaluable. As school business officials, we may be more comfortable working with spreadsheets than leading meetings, but sooner or later our communication skills are put to the test. The good news is, like any other skill, effective communication can be cultivated.

Whether you are leading a team meeting, addressing the school board, or giving a budget presentation, begin by considering your audience. Ask yourself "What do I want my audience to know? Do? Say? Feel?" The emotions of your audience are incredibly important. After all, most people trust their own emotions more than facts. Consider what you can do to help your audience feel valued and heard.

Before you present, establish your desired outcome. Write down what you hope your audience understands and feels at the end of your presentation. Tailor your message to reach that audience and achieve that goal.

When appropriate, consider implementing humor and anecdotes to connect with listeners. Engage the people in the room. This means you have to be comfortable and confident enough to connect with them. Ask thought-provoking questions and encourage the audience members to answer aloud if the format allows.

Secrets of Powerful Presenting

- People remember images more than text on a screen. What can you add or delete from your presentation slides to make them more image-heavy?

WHETHER YOU ARE LEADING A TEAM MEETING, ADDRESSING THE SCHOOL BOARD, OR GIVING A BUDGET PRESENTATION, BEGIN BY CONSIDERING YOUR AUDIENCE.

- Record a rehearsal of your presentation so you can get comfortable with it. The more you rehearse, the less likely you will stay glued to your slides.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Review your recorded rehearsal. Is there enough vocal variety in your delivery?
- Plant yourself. Moving too much can make you appear nervous and insecure.
- Avoid fillers. Feel an "um" coming on? Breathe instead. Use pauses to make a point. Don't be afraid of silence.



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WOW THE CROWD AND CONNECT WITH THOSE YOU SERVE: *(continued)*

Handling Difficult Conversations

No one particularly enjoys difficult conversations. Delivering news about budget cuts or dealing with confrontation is never comfortable. But there are practical strategies you can apply to ensure that these conversations go as smoothly as possible.

First, consider the timing. Think through the time of day, day of the week, and any other events that may impact an ideal time to share bad news with someone.

Second, if a difficult person approaches you and begins what you think may be a tough conversation, try and sit down with him or her in that moment if you have the time. Be sure you communicate the amount of time you're able to spend on the discussion at the start, and arrange to continue the conversation at a later time if necessary.

CONSIDER WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOUR AUDIENCE FEEL VALUED AND HEARD.

Third, use your body language to show that you are listening intently. Make sure your arms are not crossed, that you lean forward, and that you are making eye contact.

Remember, people want to be heard. By pausing during your day, saying "yes" to a meeting, and taking the time to listen, you are making great progress when dealing with a difficult person or discussion.

Quick Tips to Improve Communication at the Office

- If you have requests, ask them with a tone of admiration and appreciation—not demand.
- Express gratitude. Say thank you with a handwritten note or even a small gift.

- Do your best to under-promise and over-deliver. If you have over-promised, be honest and upfront about realistic alternatives.
- Take difficult employees or those who are easily misunderstood out to lunch—not because you want to reward their behavior, but because you want to understand them, become their advocate, and empower them in the process.

WHAT'S NEXT

Be intentional about delivering well-crafted messages to your audience. For a complete guide to help you and your team communicate with stakeholders, board members, staff, and community members, access the Sage School Communication Process Map and Strategy Planning tool on the Global School Business Network.

Content in this School Business Minute comes from the 2017 Annual Meeting & Expo education session, "Become an Exceptional Business Communicator."

GO DEEPER

Search DG15 on the Global School Business Network to access the full recording and session slides.

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