

Looking Back at the Annual Meeting



**The future of
the exchange
planroom**

**Retain your
Corporate
Intelligence**

**10 Productivity
Secrets Entrepreneurs
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**How to Create an
Effective
Marketing Plan**

**The Good, the Bad,
and the Funny:
Communication at
the Workplace**



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Suggestions or submissions can be sent to:
info@bx-net.org
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President's Column



Phil Davenport

While we have all been wrapped up in layers, trying to beat the cold, BXNet has been hot at work, advancing on a number of initiatives.

The 2015 Membership Directory was completed, and distributed members & associates. If you need a copy, contact Kristen at kloney@ssmgt.com and she will be happy to send you one.

Speaking of membership; if you have a builders exchange in your area that is not active or not a member, how about reaching out to them and invite them to check us out.

The BXNet Annual Convention took place January 21st and 22nd at the We-Po-Pa Resort in Scottsdale, AZ. The meetings were informative and on point, the food delicious and networking excellent.

You better go ahead and SAVE THE DATE for January 2016 for our next meeting in Savannah, GA. You won't want to miss this one!

Reporter Training is taking place October 14th & 15th, 2015 in Chicago IL. BXNet is paying for members' registration! All you have to do is be there. This is an excellent opportunity to get your folks up to speed on the latest techniques for securing projects for your plan room.

Register early, because this is likely to sell out!

A warm **THANK YOU** to all who advertise in our publications and provide sponsorships at our meetings. BXNet appreciates your support and I encourage all to support those who support us.

We continue to ask our members and associates to lend a hand with the newsletter. Submit your articles with camera ready artwork to kloney@ssmgt.com. If you want more information on a certain topic, submit it and we will try to write an article about it. Your fellow BXER's would love to hear what's on your mind!

Let us know how we are doing. We don't take membership in our organization for granted. Every member is special and important to the whole of the organization. If you see something, say something whether you like it or not. We all need to know how we can serve BXNet better.

If it's important to you, it's important to BXNet.

Let's all hope Mother Nature rewards us all with an early spring. The snow and ice and been laying around far too long. It's time for some heat and humidity.

BXNet helps to set the conditions that allows builders exchanges business's to succeed. I'm convinced, more than ever, that no business has to go it alone. Together, we have an opportunity to achieve even greater success.

Phil Davenport
BXNet President

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SAVE THE DATE



SAVE THE DATE!

REPORTER TRAINING 101

Presented by:
Brenda Romano, Virtual Builders Exchange, LLC

**OCTOBER
14-15, 2015**

Hilton Chicago O'Hare International Airport Hotel

This two day training session registration is free for BXNET members and includes continental breakfast and lunch on both days.

Attendees will learn how to get organized by:

- Evaluating your processes: the "Bailing Hay" syndrome.
- Building a work plan.
- Setting personal and team goals.
- Organizing your day.
- Using the Daily Call System.
- Tracking projects.

Attendees will take away the five rules of reporting basics:



Rule #1: The Golden Rule



Rule #2: Speak the Language



Rule #3: People are Sources



Rule #4: Leads Let You Lead



Rule #5: Verify and Defend



**JANUARY
19-21, 2016**

**BXNET
ANNUAL
MEETING**

**HYATT REGENCY
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA**

Interested in presenting?

Like to hear about a specific topic?

Volunteer or email your suggestions to info@bx-net.org.

Looking Back at the Annual Meeting

The Builders Exchange Network welcomed 27 delegates and 10 guests to the Wekopa Resort and Conference Center in Scottsdale, Arizona for the 2015 Annual Meeting. The Board of Directors and several delegate members arrived on Tuesday, January 20 for a successful Annual Board Meeting. Beginning on Tuesday evening, the beautiful Courtyard Plaza was open to all attendees and their guests to enjoy cocktails and hors d'oeuvres while nestled against the backdrop of the Fort McDowell Mountains.

Our President, Phil Davenport started the day with welcome remarks and we did roundtable introductions. We then welcomed Stephanie Angelo from Human Resource Essential, LLC to present "The Good, The Bad and the Funny: Communication in the Workplace." Stephanie addressed assumptions in the workplace, managing conflict, motivating employees and taught us the benefits of laughter in the workplace. Other sessions held that day were "The Plan Room of 2020" presented by Barb Boroskae of Winnipeg Construction Association and Rex Klein of Barryhund Administrators, Inc. Barb and Rex lead a discussion on the changes with plan rooms and how it will affect the future of exchanges. We were also joined by Arizona Attorney Karen Palecek who guided us through "How to Protect your Business and Legal Interests: From Bid Through Completion and Beyond." We ended the day with open discussion we called "Exchange your Exchange" where attendees shared their successes, challenges and overall management experiences. Later that evening, we headed over to Fort McDowell Adventures for an authentic "Cowboy Cookout" held by an open pit fire under the stars.

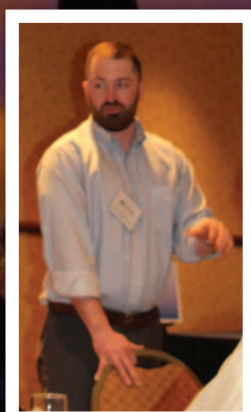
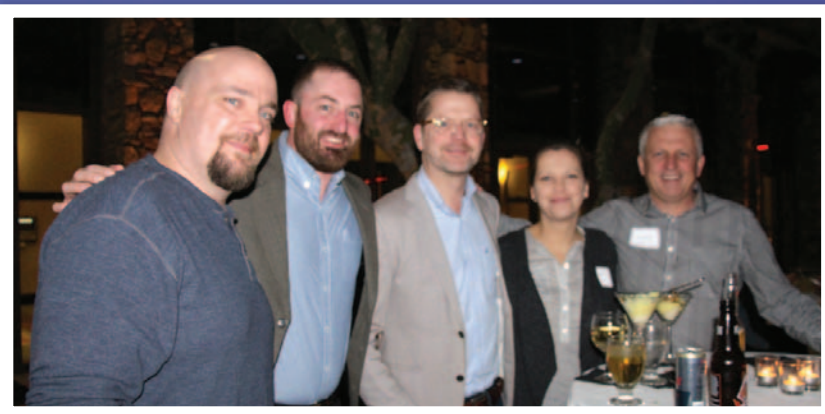
We started day two with our Annual Business Meeting then educated ourselves with "Keys to Successful Events" presented by Dave Smith of Calgary Construction Association, Joe Benedict of the Construction Exchange of Buffalo & Western New York and Phil Davenport of the Builders and Contractors Exchange, Inc. We then welcomed Elizabeth Cousins from Nosaman, LLP who informed us how P3 works for buildings, the policy behind it and where P3 is headed in the future. We finished up the day with Rex Klein from Barryhund Administrators, Inc. facilitating discussions on "Contractors and Technology: Where They Are and What We Should Do" and "Competition 101: Who Are They? What Do They Offer? What Does It Mean For Us?"

The Builders Exchange Network would like to thank all of the sponsors of this event: Builders Exchange of Tennessee; Builders & Contractors Exchange, Inc.; Online Plan Service; On Center Software; Transamerica; Builders Exchange of Kentucky; Construction Exchange of Buffalo & Western New York; Calgary Construction Association; Ottawa Construction Association; Spokane Regional Plan Center; Winnipeg Construction Association; Associated Building Contractors of the Triple Cities; Syracuse Builders Exchange

It is with your support that we can continue to make events like this one a success.

We hope that you all will plan to attend the next meeting of the Builders Exchange Network in Savannah, Georgia on January 20-21, 2016 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.





The future of the exchange planroom



Your planroom is your exchange's lifeblood. It's the reason why most members joined your exchange in the first place—and a good part of the reason why they stay. A lot has changed about the exchange planroom in the past 10 years. Fewer contractors visit daily to request copies of drawings and specifications, do take-offs or check on the latest projects posted. Why? The answer is of course that the Internet lets them do all that—and more—from the comfort of their offices or homes.

Is the physical planroom reaching the end of its functional life? The answer is probably yes. Foot traffic is down in most exchanges year over year, which means it's getting harder than ever to justify the expense of keeping hard copy documents in supply for those rare times that people do visit.

The more interesting, more uncertain discussion surrounds the electronic planroom. Because it's changing, too. It used to be that exchanges had all but cornered the market for plans and specifications on display electronically. That's not the case any more. Increasingly, owners and general contractors are hosting bid documents on their own sites. They're doing so for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the ability to control who accesses what documentation. Also new to the market are national construction document aggregators, such as FindRFP.com and GovernmentBids.com.

The challenge for builders' exchanges is to remain relevant among this market fragmentation. Because if they don't, they will continue to lose market share and be able to offer less and less value to members.

How can the exchange planroom stay relevant?

Future prospects are not all doom and gloom, but strong action is certainly required. Those exchanges that don't evolve may find themselves going the way of the dinosaur. Relationship building with designers and owners will be a critical element of this evolution. Meet with them regularly to understand their opportunities and concerns, and position your services to match their needs.

Communication—of the benefits of the local planroom—is also key. Remind buyers and designers that your exchange has been the hub of the local industry for generations. Yours is an established brand that is known and trusted among area builders. What's more, you bring current, regional bidding information to the local community. That means the contractors don't have to sift through thousands and thousands of open jobs looking something nearby. It also means that buyers get the advantage of buying from local companies, rather than ones from out of state, out of province or even out of country.

The other strength of the exchange is that staff speak the language of construction. Your people understand construction procurement and local market conditions. That kind of intelligence is not common in other parts of the country, nor among those who work outside the construction industry. It should be one of your principal selling points.

A final point to consider: realize strength from numbers.

Some local exchanges are partnering with nearby colleagues to merge planroom opportunities. As a result, they're offering more jobs to members to bid on, and a larger pool of bidders to buyers. Everyone wins.

It's clear that technology has fundamentally changed the exchange planroom—whether for the better or worse is open to interpretation. To remain relevant and valuable to members, exchanges need to stay ahead of the innovation curve and find new ways to promote and adapt their planroom services to industry decision makers.

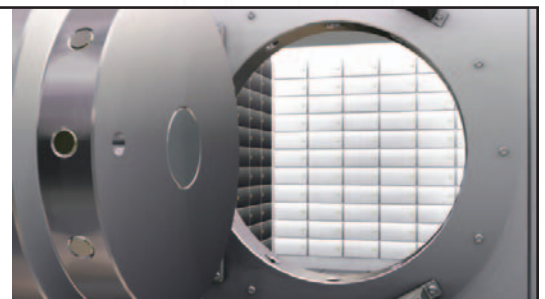


ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Be sure to visit the "Vault" at www.bx-net.org to view copies of the BXNET newsletters, slides from past Annual Meeting presentations, articles of interest, sample documents and much more!

USERNAME: ibmember PASSWORD: 2015BXnet

Why re-invent the wheel? Have sample documents or information you think would be helpful to your fellow members? Simply email it to info@bx-net.org to be uploaded into the vault.



Retain your Corporate Intelligence



By James Raiswell

When someone leaves your organization, what steps do you take to capture the knowledge he or she takes away? Chances are, if you're like most organizations, the answer is "very little". Maybe you hold an exit interview, or maybe you ask the departing worker to mentor his or her replacement for two or three weeks prior to retirement. The problem with either of these approaches is that your organization loses more than just a human resources asset when that person retires. You also lose the intelligence that person has accumulated over his or her career.

In today's workplace, knowledge and intelligence matters more than ever. We all used to get by on tools we owned and the skills we held to wield them. But that's not enough any more. The knowledge capital that any organization enjoys is the asset that sets your organization apart from the pack and gives it its competitive edge. It doesn't matter if you're running a contracting business, builder exchange or coffee shop: knowledge matters.

Knowledge management (KM) is the process of keeping tabs on your organization's knowledge capital. It's the series of processes and tools that, when put in place, does more than just document the policies, processes and procedures (which are known as explicit knowledge). It also captures the implicit knowledge (information that's not in tangible form, but which could be made so), and the tacit knowledge (information that someone would have a hard time setting out in tangible form—imagine explaining how to catch a ball to someone in an email) that are also critical to your organization's well being.



What's involved?

KM is typically the domain of large organizations where communication among employees is not always easy. That said, even steps normally used in big organizations can be easily adapted for smaller groups. The trick to successful KM is to make intelligence available to anyone in the organization who needs it. Luckily, we're blessed in today's day and age with information technology that allows us to capture and share such data seamlessly.

A good place to start in the KM process is to build a database of lessons learned. This doesn't have to be a deeply sophisticated thing. It just needs to be a clearinghouse for information about internal processes (for example, administrative practices) and external processes (engagements with members, clients and suppliers, for example) that describes what works, what doesn't work and what could be improved upon. As more and more employees commit to building such a storehouse of information, it becomes all the more valuable.

Take things a step further by engaging staff in communities of practice. Again, usually these are more easily adopted in large organizations, but smaller ones could encourage workers to network with peers outside their company or association to understand new ways of working, and bring that intelligence back to their employer via the lessons learned database.

If these solutions sound social in nature, consider that a large part of the value of KM lies outside information dumps. It's more valuable to have an experienced worker communicate directly with a junior one than it is for that experienced person to dump everything he or she knows in a document. The interaction between an expert and a peer creates new knowledge and helps to refine lessons learned. Encourage discussion to enhance the value of your organization's knowledge.

Above all keep workers engaged

KM processes work when everyone contributes to them. It doesn't work to simply create a lessons learned database and then have it fall into disuse. It needs to be updated continuously to sustain momentum. Equally, KM cannot be a top-down process where leaders encourage staff to contribute. Everyone must participate.

Your corporate knowledge is one of the most important assets your organization holds. You need to protect that intelligence and make it accessible to everyone in the group, not just select experts. Knowledge management is the process of bringing that intelligence out into the open for everyone to see and enjoy.

10 PRODUCTIVITY SECRETS ENTREPRENEURS SAY REALLY WORK

Nicole Fallon, Business News Daily

When you run a business, you wear a lot of different hats. You're in charge of the day-to-day operations, the long-term strategies and everything in between. With so many things on your plate, getting everything done may seem daunting, but with the right strategies, you can tackle every task on your to-do list and then some. Entrepreneurs shared their top tips for staying productive.

1 Define your purpose for the day. "I have a very specific routine that I follow to keep my productivity up every day. Each morning, I say to myself, 'Today, my purpose is to ...' and then I fill in the blank. Each night, I say, 'Today, I accomplished ...' and I fill in the blank. It keeps me focused on my ultimate goals and ensures that I follow through with each purpose I set for myself daily." – *Lee Barnes, president of Family Fare*

2 Follow an hourly schedule. "People tend to tackle tasks first that they think are the quickest, and put off the big, important ones, leaving less time for the stuff that really matters. Have a plan for how you are going to spend your hours, and treat it like a doctor's appointment that took months to book." – *Heather Kauffman, co-founder of Full Circle Home*

3 Write it all down. "If you write your daily goals list on paper, you're more than likely to complete that list by the end of the day. If you concentrate on completing tasks and checking them off, you will make way more progress than just simply going by memory." – *Marc Abrams, president of Stretch Zone*

4 Prioritize to account for the unexpected. "It's important to prioritize what must be done today and [not what] can wait until tomorrow. Unexpected things outside of my control might happen that will require my immediate attention. When things don't go as efficiently as expected, it is my job to figure out why, so I can make the necessary adjustments for next time." – *Mark Werpney, owner of a Window Genie franchise*



5

Don't let email consume your time. "When running a business, you can receive thousands of emails a day from clients and employees combined. In order to make sure I stay on top of my to-do list and really get things done, I only read my emails at certain hours in the day, and in time blocks." – *Lina Hu, founder and CEO of Clipper Corporation*

Hu, founder and CEO of Clipper Corporation

"I always include in my email signature who to reach if I am unavailable, so rather than people getting frustrated they have someone else to contact right away." – *Chris Drucquer, owner of a CertaPro Painters franchise*

6

Give your brain a break from business.

"One of the most efficient ways to boost productivity during the workday is to truly unplug at night so you can recharge for the day ahead. When you're a business owner, it's very hard to disconnect from your phone and laptop and give your brain a rest. I invest myself fully in DIY projects around the house like redoing our kitchen or building a desk, because it takes my full attention and forces me to get out of work mode. I find that my mind is completely refreshed the next day in the office." – *Mike Rotondo, CEO of Tropical Smoothie Café*

7

Reduce clutter. "While the saying, 'a messy desk is a sign of a creative mind' might be true, it also reduces productivity and increases stress. Even in this digital age, people need to keep certain papers handy, but odds are most people print out and save a lot more things than they really need to. Invest

in a desktop scanner and use it daily." – *Jennifer Adams, CEO and founder of Jennifer Adams Worldwide*

8

Ditch the conference room. "Every morning, I postpone, shorten or cancel meetings to free up time for higher-priority projects. Most of the time, meetings can be replaced by quick conversations, so pick up the phone or walk across the room rather than living in the conference room." – *Mike Del Ponte, founder and CEO of Soma*

and CEO of Soma

9

Stay positive and have fun with your work.

"We all need to be serious about our work, but no one needs to be somber. Serious work should still be fun, and remaining positive in tough situations can greatly affect your productivity." – *Joe Schumacher, CEO of Goddard Systems, Inc.*

"Even when I'm extremely frustrated, angry or annoyed, I think about the joys and positive components of running my own business. I no longer have to deal with the tedious commute to work, the strict dress code, shady office politics or constantly worrying about job stability." – *Lance Jensen, CEO of Global Garage Flooring and Design*

10

Learn to bounce back quickly from failure.

"Failure ... is really there to be a call to action. It's always about trial-and-error experiences to see what works and what doesn't. You make an assessment from your learnings — some things do not work, and it's absolutely OK. It's about applying that lesson to the next thing in order to go through the process, and embracing the realization that you are making progress. Taking forward steps with each day is the key to productivity." – *Teddy Shalon, CEO of ThinOptics*

Teddy Shalon, CEO of ThinOptics

BXNet
Builders Exchange Network

The BXNET's Mission, Vision and Strategic Goals
BUILDING OUR FUTURE

**"Serving Construction Association
and Builders Exchange Professionals"**



How to Create an **EFFECTIVE** Marketing Plan

Katherine Arline, Business News Daily

A marketing plan may not be at the top of every new business owner's to-do list, but it should be. While a business plan helps map the direction for your company, a marketing plan helps your company understand how to get there by detailing important steps on the road to creating customer relationships.

"The single most important thing for a small business to include in its marketing plan is a very clear understanding of its customers and its competitors," said Robert Thomas, professor of marketing at the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University.

Though a marketing plan can be formal or informal, at a minimum it describes who your customers are, where they get information, and how you are going to reach them. Thomas said the development of a marketing plan requires four specific tasks:

Develop a very clear and focused insight into why a potential customer would use your business. More specifically, what is the core need that your product

or service will meet? Is it to help your customers get through the day more easily? Do their job more efficiently? Be respected and admired by friends? Your offering should be designed to meet customer needs better than the competition.

Identify your target customers. There are numerous potential customers in most markets, but to succeed faster and better, a small business must study the market to determine the characteristics of its best target customers. The target customer should be described in detail. In doing so, a business also develops a clearer picture of the expected sales revenues and financials.

Identify competitors that would also want your target customers. There is always a competitor — never make the mistake of assuming there isn't. Small businesses seldom take the time to study their competitors in depth. But you must understand who your competitors are, what their core competitive advantage is and how they will respond to your offering (price cuts, increased communication, etc.).

Write down your brand-positioning statement for your target customers. Ultimately, your brand and what it symbolizes for customers will be your strongest competitive advantage. You should be able to write down a simple declarative sentence of how you will meet customer needs and beat the competition. The best positioning statements are those that are single-minded and focus on target customer needs.

While these steps are a good starting point, companies also need to incorporate multiple channels into their marketing plans. Some of the most popular channels for today's businesses include:

Social media marketing



Social media has become an essential part of businesses' marketing plans. Businesses that have yet to realize the opportunities that Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn and other networks provide them are missing out. Even though the concept of social media marketing may overwhelm certain small business owners, the process does not need to be a challenge, as more services and companies are popping up more and more frequently.

Brett Farmiloe, founder of Internet marketing company Markitors, advised companies that are just getting started in social media to get to know their customers.

"Figure out where your customers are spending their time and set up shop on those platforms," Farmiloe told Business News Daily. "Develop a content strategy that can be executed internally, [and then] execute your strategy by posting branded content on your selected platforms. While all three steps are key, the biggest one is really determining if your customers are on these platforms."

Email marketing

Though email marketing may not be as new of a concept as social media marketing, it is an effective and popular choice for many small business owners. Companies can implement email-marketing techniques in a number of ways, including newsletters, promotional campaigns and transactional emails. Companies such as MailChimp and Constant Contact make it easy for companies to manage their email campaigns.

Farmiloe noted that companies can set their email marketing efforts apart by segmenting their market.

"Not all subscribers want to receive the same blast," Farmiloe said. "Smart email marketers take the time to segment subscribers at the outset, and then continue to seg-



ment based on subscriber activity. Through segmentation, companies reduce the amount of unsubscribes, increase open rates, and most importantly, increase the amount of actions taken from an email send." [For a side-by-side comparison of the best email marketing services, visit our sister site *Top Ten Reviews*]

Mobile marketing

The popularity of smart-phones and tablets has helped to change the way companies target their customers. As a result, companies are looking to implement strategies that reach customers on their devices.

Mobile marketing should not be considered a mere extension of email or online marketing, however. Since many consumers have a mobile device with them at all times, texts and push notifications will almost certainly be seen by the recipient.

"Mobile marketing is interruptive," Farmiloe said. "It's because of this power that a marketer has to let the consumer determine how and when to receive marketing material. That's why almost every app comes with the option to turn notifications on or off. The consumer has to hold the power with mobile marketing."

To optimize your mobile marketing presence, carefully consider how and when you reach your mobile customers. Be sensitive to when and why they use their phones, and offer them information that is pertinent to their situation.

Next steps

Once strategies have been identified for each channel, you need to figure out your strategy. How much are you willing to spend in each channel? What outcomes do you expect to see? What tasks do you need to accomplish for each step in your process? Creating a well-defined list of budgets, goals and action items, with appropriate personnel assigned to each, can help make your marketing plan a reality.

It is also important to decide in advance how you will measure success. Are you hoping to see increased sales or traffic, or new client contacts? Set six-month milestones for each channel, and compare the results against prior efforts and your expectations. If a channel is underperforming, examine the consequences for both abandoning it and for adding more resources. If your efforts have fallen flat as the result of a failure to understand the medium's audience, go back to basics. Asking your customers to complete an email survey about their social media habits in exchange for a coupon or discount may help you learn surprising relationships between customer demographics and your marketing efforts.



THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE FUNNY



Communication at the Workplace

Stephanie Angelo, SPHR, SCP

Why is good communication at work so important? Knocking down the barriers to good communication leads to team-wide understanding of everyone's roles and responsibilities, duties, and protocols for solving problems. Whether your workplace consists of a group of individuals sitting three feet away, or colleagues across state lines, good communication brings us together and erases feelings of isolation. Let's break it down for a closer look.

Important to your success - both individually and as part of a team.

Think about it; people are watching you and people will talk about you. If you cannot, and for some, will not communicate well, it will affect how people feel about you. Does it increase the number of people who want to partner with you or do you find yourself on the outside looking in?

Poor communication leads to lower productivity.

The old "snowball effect" of a small problem getting bigger. Poor communication leads to lower productivity when team members lose interest and emotional buy-in to the process. As productivity lowers people tend to effectively communicate even less. Morale takes a hit. That just worsens productivity more – and well, you get the drift.

Builds trust

Understanding that trust takes time to build is perfectly acceptable. But it's important to make an effort to always

move forward in the process of building trust and ensuring it's mutual. Everyone wants to be trusted – it's human nature. You can't expect it without extending it. The micro-manager may have to learn to delegate. The intensely reserved may have to open up emotionally – even if it's just a little at first. If you don't have trust in your relationships you don't really have a relationship at all.

In cyclical fashion research shows that high performing teams also generate more trust. Teams that keep in constant contact with each other and focus on open communication perform better than those that don't.

Everyone wants to be on a team with a high level of commitment, collaboration and, trust – all of which develop and sustain from healthy, effective communication. Effective communication is the very foundation of any high performing team

Barriers to Communication

In a perfect world there would never be anything in the way of healthy, cooperative, trusting communication. The reality is that there are barriers that bear discussion.

Environmental

Surroundings aren't good: As a Human Resources manager, I once had an office that was surrounded by glass. There are few things that make having confidential discussions with employees harder than being in a fish bowl. Take a look at your office. Would a conference room be better? Are you trying to have meetings in the cafeteria, or in a hallway?

Physical discomfort: Everything from illness, to injury, to poor ergonomics, to running past lunchtime - make sure that your conversations are taking place when and where you're ensuring the comfort of everyone involved. It never hurts to ask, "Is there anything I can do to help make you more comfortable?"

Visual distractions: I have to admit when I was in my fishbowl I looked out as much as people looked in. Are you watching the door? Checking your phone? When you're with another person, or many, eye contact is essential. People want to be *seen*. Even if you're talking over the phone when you're distracted your listener will know it.

Interruptions: Beeping, buzzing, vibrating, rock-n-roll playing electronic leashes- ummm, cell phones have done more to hurt healthy communication than to help it. They aren't the only culprit though, so are people who have a need for immediate gratification. They see you and they "need" to talk. Part of high performing teams is to develop a norm of patience and scheduling flavored with independence.

Noise: One of my clients, a manufacturing company, had to break managers out of the habit of holding ad-hoc meetings on the production floor. No one could hear a thing. Unless the purpose of the meeting is to survey the machinery in action hold your meetings in a quieter location.

Verbal

Speaking too quickly, not clearly: Unless he's telling a story, my husband speaks so quickly my brain hasn't processed his rapid-fire soliloquy before he's on to the next thing. His solution is that I should listen faster. Are you guilty of doing the same? Are you causing frustration in

other people as a result? It's possible that if you are, they are embarrassed to tell you. But they won't talk to you as much and you may be excluded from discussions. Clear and articulate is the motto of the day.

Slang, jargon, acronyms: Sometimes even people in your same industry don't know all the "alphabet soup". Quite a few acronyms have multiple meanings. Is NSA the National Security Agency, or National Speakers Association? Or both? It's a good opportunity to check for understanding when you use any of these. Or just don't.

Interpretation of figures of speech: "ASAP" (see above paragraph!), "moved the meeting", "whenever" and other similar terms are too open for interpretation. If at Tuesday's team meeting your supervisor tells you she wants a report on her desk "as soon as possible" it may mean Friday at the end of business to you. It might mean in two hours to her.

If your co-worker tells you Tuesday's team meeting is moved, does that mean it's in a different conference room? Or does it mean it was re-scheduled for Wednesday?

Non-verbal

Facial expressions, body language, vocal tone:

Confusion usually comes from one of the above not matching what's being said. Have you ever thought someone was angry because their eyes were squinting and their arms were crossed? If you asked for clarification you might find out that, for them, the air conditioning was way too low and the blast was drying their contact lenses.

Interpersonal

The relationship: If the people involved have previous issues, or if at one point they were peers and now one is the Supervisor, you can be faced with relationship



dynamics that have to be adjusted. Sometimes you have to work through to a new normal. Open dialogue is key.

Perceptions and assumptions of the person: Let's face it – it human nature to form immediate assumptions about someone which will factor into all you communication. Being aware of that and reminding yourself that jumping to conclusions is detrimental to high performing teams.

Trigger phrases: Have you ever been told "calm down"? If you have you probably remember that it made you want to do anything but calm down. The phrase has a tendency to ignite emotions – sometimes even anger. As does, "you're over-reacting". Phrases which type-cast and categorize people almost always bring about the opposite of the intended reaction.

Biases (gender, race...) It's the new millennial and we've seen the destruction caused by biases. See the paragraph on perceptions above.

Introvert, extrovert, open, reserved, analytical, intuitive... These are just a few of the personality types you find in any working environment. Teams that communicate effectively find ways to understand these typologies and capitalize on them. For example your reserved individual may prefer being a behind-the-scenes researcher on a project; allowing the extrovert to report on the finding at your next meeting.

So how do you ensure better communication?

- Choose the best place for the discussion
- Schedule/plan for interruption and distraction free conversation
- Unleash from the electronics
- Focus on the details of the situation
- Become aware of potential biases
- Consider and dispel perceptions
- Adjust to the "needs" of that personality type
- Pay close attention: vocal responses and appearance may bely confusion
- Help clarify for recipient
- Ask questions – including "Why"
- Repeat received information for understanding

Humor:

Humor is such a great element to insert into everyday life. It helps us cope and relieves tension, helps establish communication and rapport and even increases learning and retention.

But, of course, not ever form of humor is appropriate at work. Appropriate forms of workplace humor include: Self-related jokes

Non-discriminatory jokes in reference to workplace issues such as a merger, difficult customers, and so on.

And hands-down when people make self-effacing jokes about their own personal characteristics in low-ego areas.

A Humorous Example of Poor Communication

Here is an illustration of poor communication that's been passed around. My source was: <http://tiny.cc/kgeqwx>

It's a cute story of how a workplace didn't communicate with a customer.

A rather old fashioned lady, was planning a couple of weeks vacation in Florida. She also was quite delicate and elegant with her language. She wrote a letter to a particular campground and asked for reservations. She wanted to make sure the campground was fully equipped but didn't know quite how to ask about the "toilet" facilities. She just couldn't bring herself to write the word "toilet" in her letter. After much deliberation, she finally came up with the old fashioned term "Bathroom Commode," but when she wrote that down, she still thought she was being too forward. So she started all over again; rewrote the entire letter and referred to the "Bathroom Commode" simply as the "B.C.". Does the campground have its own "B.C.?" is what she actually wrote.

Well, the campground owner wasn't old fashioned at all, and when he got the letter, he couldn't figure out what the lady was talking about. That "B.C." really stumped him. After worrying about it for several days, he showed the letter to other campers, but they couldn't figure out what the lady meant either. The campground owner finally came to the conclusion that the lady was and must be asking about the location of the local Baptist Church.

So he sat down and wrote the following reply:

"Dear Madam: I regret very much the delay in answering your letter, but I now take pleasure of informing in that the "B.C." is located nine miles north of the camp site and is capable of seating 250 people at one time. I admit it is quite a distance away if you are in the habit of going regularly but no doubt you will be pleased to know that a great number of people take their lunches along, and make a day of it..... They usually arrive early and stay late. The last time my wife and I went was six years ago, and it was so crowded we had to stand up the whole time we were there. It may interest you to know that right now, there is a supper planned to raise money to buy more seats.....They plan to hold the supper in the middle of the "B.C.", so everyone can watch and talk about this great event.....I would like to say it pains me very much, not to be able to go more regularly, but it is surely not for lack of desire on my part....As we grow older, it seems to be more and more of an effort, particularly in cold weather..... If you decide to come down to the campground, perhaps I could go with you the first time you go...sit with you...and introduce you to all the other folks..... This is really a very friendly community....

Stephanie Angelo helps businesses increase workplace productivity. She has decades of experience in ineffective communication's effects on the workplace and ensures clients receive ideas and skills which immediately motivate them, and increase their ability to address this challenging issue. To learn more call her at (480) 726-9833 or send an email to Stephanie@hressential.com.