

## Communicating Clearly At Work

### **Performance Objective**

After practicing this module, managers will be able to name and give examples of the four components of a clear communication. They will also be able to demonstrate their use by making a variety of responses in different situations.

Clear Communication – is a four part sentence that increases your chances of being understood clearly and allows you the opportunity to state exactly what you want to have happen.  
**“When the report isn’t done – I feel angry – because I need it for my meeting – please get it to me by ten am.”**

**Purpose and Use:** This method of communication should be used by employees during high-stress incidents. Employees will learn to express their feelings and their wants simply and plainly; and to show an understanding of a person’s feelings and wants, making situations more manageable.

As presented here, this method shows employees how to express themselves clearly and helps them present their own understanding of the situation, how they feel about it, and what they would like to see happen.

The Communicating Clearly model has four parts:

1. Observations
2. Feelings
3. Responsibility
4. Requesting What You Want

### **PART 1—OBSERVATIONS Vs. Judgments**

We find that constructive communication consists of four components. The first of these is OBSERVATION. Observations refer to specific actions. In stating an observation, our objective is to express clearly and objectively the action we observed. An observation is neither an abstract evaluation nor a judgment; an observation does not contain any inference about a person’s motives, feelings, or thoughts.

Observations

a. “John is pacing.”

Judgments

“John is nervous.”

- |                               |                        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| b. "Alice cried after lunch." | "Alice was depressed." |
| c. "Henry snapped at Ralph."  | "Henry is aggressive." |

### **PART 2—FEELINGS Vs. Thoughts**

The second component of clear communication deals with FEELINGS. We must clarify what we FEEL in relation to what we observe, and differentiate this from what we THINK.

FEELINGS are expressions of our emotions—we can FEEL happy, angry, confused, sad, scared, or weak. When we express these feelings to another, that person understands clearly, because he or she has FELT the same way. If, on the other hand, we say "I feel like a child," what we are THINKING is personal and may mean one thing to us and another thing to the listener.

Feelings	Thoughts
"I feel happy."	"I feel like going to lunch."
"I feel sad."	"I feel like saying 'to heck with it'."
"I'm really mad!"	"I feel like I have to get back at him."

NOTE: When speaking to a co-worker the only statement of feeling managers will use is, "I feel concerned."

### **PART 3—RESPONSIBILITY Vs. Blame**

Our third area of concern in clear communication is taking responsibility for feeling the way we do. It is easy to overlook what is going on in ourselves that causes us to feel the way we do.

Frequently, the language that we use implies that our feelings are the result of someone else's actions. For example:

(Incorrect examples)

- "You make me frustrated when you talk like that."
- "You make me angry when you are late."
- "I feel mad when you don't do what I asked you to do."

Taking responsibility for our own feelings requires looking at our inner reactions that contribute to those feelings. For example, in the statement, "I feel angry because I think that I have been insulted," we have followed an expression of our feelings with a statement of responsibility. In contrast, we frequently place the blame or responsibility for our feelings on others. Compare these two examples:

(Incorrect)

“When you tell me that you’re really mad, I feel concerned because you may come back ready to punch someone.”

(Correct)

“When you tell me that you’re really mad, I feel concerned because I don’t know what you are going to do.”

#### **PART 4—MAKING A CLEAR REQUEST**

An element of constructive communication is clearly stating what you want. Since employees are sometimes unclear about what they want, they too can communicate poorly. Learning to express yourself clearly will increase the possibility of getting what you want. There are three criteria when requesting what you want.

1. The statement is directed.  
That is, it defines who we want to do something. For example, “I would like you to tell me the facts again,” is directed, as opposed to “I need the facts when I return.”
2. The statement is positive. That is, it states what I want, instead of what I don’t want. For example, “I want you to clean this area,” is positive, whereas “I want you to stop leaving the boxes on the floor,” is not.
3. The statement is observable. It expresses what we want in terms of a behavior that can be observed. For example, “I want you to lower your voice,” is observable, while “I want you to be civil,” is not observable.

Of course, using **MAKING A CLEAR REQUEST** does not guarantee that what we want will happen, but it gives our listener a clear explanation of what we want, and sets the stage for continuing open communication.

Worksheet

(Judgment vs. observation) What I Judge to be	What I observe
(Thinking vs. feeling) What I think	What I feel
(Blame vs. responsibility) Who I blame	How I'm responsible
(What I want – precisely) What I don't want	What I DO want

<b>Objective statement concerning the event</b> <b>(the report is not completed)</b>	<b>WHEN ...</b>
<b>And this is how it I feel about that</b> <b>(mad, sad, glad, ...)</b>	<b>I FEEL ...</b>
<b>This is what is going on for me that causes</b> <b>me to feel this way</b>	<b>BECAUSE I ...</b>
<b>This is what I want you to do</b> <b>Positive – what I want, not what I want you</b> <b>to stop or not do...</b>	<b>AND I WANT ...</b>

## Trainer Script

### Introduction

Leaders need many skills, financial skills, planning skills, organizational skills, people skills and many others. An absolutely essential skill – the skill to get things done – to execute critical plans is inextricably linked to communicating well.

When you think back to your skill development it is unlikely that you will remember any training beyond a course in listening. It is odd that so critical a function is thought to be in place simply because we do it every day. But communicating well can be learned. As a coach I help leaders with a number of communication tools – or scripts. Today's session will deal with a four step skill designed to teach many lessons.

The end result will be a method of #1 preparing for a difficult exchange by placing particular words and phrases into the model and then #2 using this model to express yourself clearly and succinctly!

Let's begin