



Dear Friends and Clients,

Susie, an attorney in a large company, has been active in a corporate mentoring committee composed of volunteers who use their own time to support young professionals. But after leading many programs, Susie recently said she would leave the committee when her current term ends. She loves the mentoring activities, but decided to let somebody else lead them so she can focus on big challenges coming up in her main job.

Susie felt guilty about leaving and expected her committee colleagues to try to convince her to stay on. She said that there was about a 30 percent chance that she would agree to accept another term.

The expected call came from Janet, a lawyer at another location. Janet said she was angry because Susie's departure meant that she might get stuck with more of the committee work. She implied that she worked harder than other attorneys and that her cases were more important than Susie's.

Had Susie been told that her leadership was vital to the committee, she might have been convinced to stay. Instead she heard that she should be the one to take on the volunteer tasks because her legal work is less important than Janet's. Before the end of the conversation, Susie was fully committed to leaving.

Janet is trained in advocacy but she didn't apply those skills here. She didn't get her way because she made the common mistake of using her conversation with Susie to vent instead of to persuade. You may notice that this happens in your work place, even though, as far back as Plato and Aristotle, experts have said that effective communications begin with an understanding of your audience's interests.

I will talk more about successful communications in this issue. But first I'll mention that, as always, there will be no issue following July 4th, so you'll receive my next ezine on July 20.

Warm wishes, Bev

**Want to Sell Your Ideas?
Go Back to the Basics
Of Effective Communications**

If you are a professional, chances are that communicating ideas is an important part of your job. Whether you are speaking to a single colleague or planning a major campaign, your success may depend on your ability to communicate in a persuasive way. And even beyond your career, your ability to be convincing can impact your opportunities for leadership and success in many areas of your life.

Whenever you are planning a communication initiative, pause and ask yourself three questions:

- What is the **message**?
- Who are the **audiences**?
- What are the **delivery channels**?

Consider these suggestions as you explore the answers to these questions:

- **Shape your core message.**
 - **Start by examining the problem** you want to address from as many angles as possible.
 - **Make your message “sticky.”** In the clever book **“Made to Stick,”** authors Chip Heath and Dan Heath offer these principles for framing a message that sticks with the audience:
 - **Simplicity.** Strip your idea to its core. The Golden Rule is a great example of a complex message made simple.
 - **Unexpectedness.** Generate interest and curiosity before making your point. One simple technique is to get audience attention by starting with a question.
 - **Concreteness.** Use clear images that listeners can envision. Invent graphic phrases along the lines of “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.”
 - **Credibility.** The Heath brothers suggest that people are skeptical about authority, so it is not enough to rely on your credentials. Instead, they say, “Sticky ideas have to carry their own credentials.” They suggest using questions that allow visitors to test for themselves, like: “Before you vote, ask yourself if you are better off today than you were four years ago.”
 - **Emotions.** Get people to care about your ideas by making them feel something. Note that one photo of a bird covered in oil can have more impact than a press release full of statistics about oil spilling in the Gulf.

- **Stories.** Get people to act on your ideas by telling stories make your points feel real and vivid.
- **Get to know your audience:**
 - **Listen.** Find out what they want by listening intently. Stephen Covey wrote: “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”
 - **Check your “Emotional Intelligence.”** You can see the audience more clearly if you understand your own goals, biases and emotions.
 - **Define segments.** As you think about your audience, break it into manageable groups with similar interests.
 - **Address what they want.** Reframe your message so that it responds to something that your audience segments need, want or care about.
 - **Build relationships.** When you are selling an idea, it is great to have your network in place. Test your ideas as you build your network.
- **Deliver your message in ways that work:**
 - **Use multiple channels.** As you implement your communications plan, mix it up a bit. Use many ways to deliver and reinforce your core message. For example, if you intend to offer a proposal at a meeting, set it up with a preliminary email, send along related background information and call people to explore their reactions and build support.
 - **Build a drumbeat** Repetition can help get your message across. Create a regular cadence with consistent themes repeated at a steady pace.
 - **Use events.** Gatherings can be a great way to deliver your message, particularly if you take full advantage of the invitation and follow-up process. But they can be expensive and time-consuming

Let us explore more ideas with you. In addition to providing executive coaching, Bev and her Clearways colleagues are available to speak about communications and many other issues related to your work and work life success. We'll build a program to meet your needs. Learn more at **www.ClearWaysConsulting.com** or email to **Bev** directly.