



APPLYING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Effective Communications

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The focus of this article is the application of emotional intelligence in the communications process.

Project Managers without doubt need to be *great* communicators.

Communication in projects happens in so many ways ranging from emails, reports, phone calls, text messages, meetings to my favourite of simple getting up, walking around and talking to people. Unfortunately technology and the existence of virtual teams has reduced the use of this powerful means of establishing rapport, trust and a key opportunity to relate to others..

In any form of communications, we need to consider our own emotions, the emotional content of the message as well as the emotions of the recipients.

1. **Self Awareness:** The only person's behaviour you are in control of is your own. A key factor in communications is awareness of your own emotions. Communications is equally about the emotions conveyed in the message as the words contained in the message. The emotional exchange holds the communication process together. To communicate in a way that motivates or engages others, you have to be able to access your emotions and recognise how they influence your actions and relationships. A lack of self awareness can often lead to our own emotional state leaking out in undesired ways. What technology has highlighted is our need to be even more conscious of our emotions in in our means of communication
2. **Emotional Management:** When we are stressed we often resort to undesired behaviours. Stress shuts down our ability to feel and to think rationally. We become emotionally unavailable to others in our team, essentially blocking the communication process. Our stress leaks out via emails bombs, sarcasm, criticism and comments we would other not normally make in a calmer state. Communicating with emotional intelligence involves recognising when our stress levels are ineffective and finding useful ways to relax and return to an energized state of awareness. Your team will thank you for it. This could include a simple walk around the block, humor or even deep breathing.
3. **What We Don't Say:** In communications Words count for 7%, Tonality was 38% and Physiology 55%. We cannot help but NOT communicate by our physiology. Eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, posture, gesture, touch, intensity, timing, pace, and sounds that convey understanding engage the brain and influence others much more than your words alone. Think about when someone is not really listening to you – you know it, you sense it. The same applies the message you communicate to others.
4. **Practise ACTIVE listening:** Active listening is about listening for meaning. It is about the content of what is being said as well as the emotion underneath this content. It is often more appropriate to respond to the emotion than the actual words. "I sense you feel frustrated..."; "You sound disappointed..". Acknowledging what others are feeling is key in developing relationships with your team and other stakeholders. Listen with empathy and paraphrase to ensure understanding of meaning. Ask open ended questions to ensure understanding. When a person has felt "heard" it makes engaging in a discussion towards resolution more effective.

The subject of communications is vast and this small article is only a brush stroke of this area.

What is important is to ask yourself – What one small step or change can I make in the following days or week to improve what I do in my communications ?



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