

## HOW TO COMMUNICATE RESPECTFULLY: PART TWO

**Karen Landsberg**

In this article I share more practical tips on how to communicate respectfully, build a reputable reputation and be successful in our engagements. Successful communication starts with:

- **A proud posture and poise with presence.** Poise can be described as composure (self-control) and dignity (self-worth) of manner. It is a graceful and elegant bearing in a person. Elegance and poise stand together. A poised person has elegant mannerisms. The way he/she talks, carries him/herself is fluid and gentle, yet strong and purposeful. Having an upright posture portrays confidence and commands respect.<sup>1</sup>
- **High emotional intelligence (EQ) and good conflict management skills.** Emotional intelligence is “the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. It is generally said to include emotional awareness, the ability to harness emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problems solving and the ability to manage emotions.<sup>2</sup>”

It is important that we practice to keep our cool and stay respectful but be assertive in our communication engagements. Being assertive means that we are neither passive (my opinion is not important, your opinion is all that matters) nor aggressive (my opinion is all that counts, your opinion does not matter). When we communicate assertively the goal is neither to avoid conflict nor to dominate a relationship, but to communicate feelings and opinions honestly and clearly without hurting oneself or others. It is self-respecting (not allowing yourself to be bullied) and respectful towards others (considering and respecting their

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Dreyer, The 5 Languages of Image, 2013, Colourworks International

<sup>2</sup> Visit: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/emotional-intelligence>

opinions). Assertive communication is about finding mutually satisfactory solutions to problems and conflicts that arise in our relationships. It is about mutual problem solving. Assertive people are generally respected and seen as competent, strong, fair and confident. Being assertive means I am honest with myself and honest with you – respectfully. It is not always easy and takes bravery, but it builds trust. It takes a certain level of emotional intelligence.

- **Listening more than you speak.** “Listening to understand and not with the intent to just reply”<sup>3</sup> is a great phrase to ponder. When we take the time to really listen to people we gain valuable information that enables and empowers us in our conversations and engagements with them. When we have gained a true understanding of the thoughts and needs of our spouses, children, clients, bosses and colleagues, we can be more effective in our reactions, actions and behaviours towards them.

Prof Frank J. Navran<sup>4</sup> believes that listening is the single most respectful behaviour. He says we must “listen with the intention of hearing, evaluating, learning and using whatever others might offer that adds value. And, then be certain to give credit where it is due.”

- **Thinking before you speak.** When we utter words to others, we can never take them back. Words are powerful – they can make or break – and should be used respectfully towards others irrespective of their position, rank or level.

Be careful of too much jargon, use appropriate words for the person/audience you are communicating with/to and be aware of the tone of your voice. The way in which one says something contributes greatly to how one’s words are received.

Also, be careful when giving compliments in the workplace to avoid unwanted sexual harassment allegations.

- **Thinking TWICE before you write and post/send that message.** Our written communication contributes to our reputation and affects people’s perception of, and

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Lessons in Personal Change*.

<sup>4</sup> Article by Prof Frank J. Navran (Ethics, Compliance and Leadership Consultant), *Respect! Give it. Get it.*

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confidence in, our work. Well-written communication messages build trust in our brands, products and services we offer. Remember, words shared on paper or in cyberspace cannot be taken back. Rather ask a trusted friend or colleague to check important online messages, posts, e-mails and documents to ensure clarity, quality and professionalism.

Remember: "It has been said that words are the only things which last forever."<sup>5</sup>

**Add respect to the mixture and communicate for success.**

Prof Navran is of the opinion that respect is earned when a person consistently demonstrates the values he/she lives by and when there is congruence between what he/she does and says. This also results in relationships of trust.

We should model what we desire through our words and deeds, and lead by example. Only then can we reasonably expect respect from others. If we want to be respected as a person, we should begin by behaving respectfully towards others.

**It's simple. When you give it, you get it.**<sup>6</sup>

11 August 2016

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Karen Landsberg is a communications specialist and trainer with ProEthics. Her people skills, blended with years of corporate communications experience, empower clients to be professional and successful communicators. For training and consulting needs visit [www.proethics.co.za](http://www.proethics.co.za) or e-mail [karen@proethics.co.za](mailto:karen@proethics.co.za).



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<sup>5</sup> Churchill, 10 June 1909, Press conference, Foreign Office, London (cited in Langworth, Churchill: In His Own Words)

<sup>6</sup> Article by Prof Frank J. Navran (Ethics, Compliance and Leadership Consultant), Respect! Give it. Get it.

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