

# What is your CORE Communication Style?

Activity and Discussion Summary from 2016 AAWCC Summer Conference

This workshop was led by Pam Akini, with Clackamas Community College. This presentation was a modified workshop to look into different Communication Styles and talk with other members about how our communication styles impact our team and how we approach work. Identifying your own, and differing, communication styles allows a team to maximize performance and foster positive working relationships.

Below is the feedback given by groups that identify with the traits that we used.

## What are the “Do’s” and “Do Not’s” when communicating with you? (Exacting vs. Generalizing)

### For “Exacting” Communication Styles

#### Do:

- Be direct
- Have all the facts
- If you have a question or complaint, come with an answer or solution-or at least a brainstorm
- Take responsibility and be accountable  
Listen to us talk about the details.
- Give me the facts/details, not just generalized information
- Clarity (clear language, no acronyms, no extra info or TMI)
- Present the facts
- Provide clear outlines and deadlines
- Promote solid and strong leadership
- Be clear and specific (get to the point)
- Know the steps to follow to get stuff done
- In email: *do* answer the question we asked
- Allow for clarifying questions
- Have facts and a timeline
- Know the details
- Have clear objectives leading to the big picture
- Tell us the why of what we’re doing or changes our department or institution is making
- Tell us the goal of the change
- Allow for autonomy
- When it comes to the Big Picture, we want to know our piece, our responsibility, who to report to, who sanctions decisions
- Come to me with the project life cycle approach—tell me where we are in the cycle and then I will respond discerningly with a view to operationalizing

#### Don’t:

- Give excuses
- Ramble
- Exaggerate
- Use feelings as though they are facts
- Be vague
- Have a plan that isn’t going to be achievable
- Blame others, must address the problem and move forward
- Expect me to fill in the gaps
- Engage me in casual musings
- Embellish unnecessarily
- Forget timelines
- Not know the priorities
- Hold pointless meetings without agendas or goals
- Lack details
- Plan at the last minute
- Make assumptions
- Have too much “fluff”
- Leave without important details
- Have circular venting (more feeling than fact)
- Don’t give too many details at inappropriate times
- Micromanage / restrict our creative flow
- Assume we’re lazy or don’t care
- Exclude us from discussions of the Big Picture
- Question our capability or creativity
- Skip steps or oversimplify

## For “Generalizing” Communication Styles

### Do:

- Tell me purpose
- Give data at the right time
- Start with a goal-what are we going to accomplish?
- Big Picture-visual aid
- Answer the why
- “Summaries Good”
- We appreciate our exacting team members—please know that we aren’t black and white
- Start with the vision/big picture because it motivates/energizes us to dig into details.
- Have your ideas lined up
- Focus on the end result
- Entertain different ways to do something
- Allow for diversity, inclusion, and flexibility
- Be mindful; be aware of context and open to interpretation
- Be able to be flexible and adaptable
- Get to the point
- Be direct
- Recognize our optimism for possibility
- Focus on the goal

### Don’t:

- Start with data
- Don’t tell me the path-let’s work together to find it
- Don’t treat me like a tree when I see the forest. Don’t think we don’t care about the trees just because we are focused on the forest
- Expect us to remember details
- Get mired in the minutiae
- Give us a list (3 answers to each question!)
- Be too serious or literal
- Focus too much on your data to justify your position
- Data in education can be interpreted to mean?
- Restrict my process
- Be close minded
- Get in the weeds
- Ramble
- Get weighed down by details

**What is the BEST way to approach you when presenting a new project or idea? What is the WORST? (Urgent vs. Relaxed)**

**For an URGENT Communication Style**

**BEST**

- You got 29 seconds (like at the doctor's office)
- Get to the point
- I'll ask questions later if I want to know more
- Be direct with clear expectations and goals
- Efficiency
- Important details
- Concise
- Alignment with goals
- Focus
- Realistic visionary
- Answer "What do you need from me?"
- Give us the Who. What. When. Where. Why. in an organized manner
- Be purposeful and direct, just tell us what you need
- Clear facts, outcome focused, action oriented, bullet point
- Invite input for better collaboration
- "Get to the damn point."

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**WORST**

- Indirect approach with no agenda or direction
- Lengthy, non-directive, non-clear, rambling, time consuming, non-fact based, unsupported, non-research based, subjective means of communication or presentation which wastes time and resources
- Unorganized
- Being verbose, talking around the point
- Be ambiguous
- Circular conversations
- Adding to the agenda after it's been created
- Unclear, beating around the bush

## For a RELAXED Communication Style

### BEST

- Give me the job, tell me the timelines, and let me get started.
- Optimistic, enthusiastic, positive
- With integrity
- Be open and honest
- Leave time to discuss
- Have courtesy and respect
- Approach me with the big picture including the purpose and expected outcomes
- Smile
- Relaxed, informal setting
- Establish rapport
- We like to be approached ahead of time and told the reasons behind the change / project
- The relaxed person wants to know the rationale behind the outcome
- Ask for it
- Build a relationship, i.e. going for coffee
- Ask for a deadline
- “Can-do” attitude
- Solicit input informally within a cooperative team environment and provide an opportunity for redirection
- We need to know the why (narrative)
- We need time to process
- We like to have our input / feedback solicited
- We need clear parameters and direction as well as a deadline
- Be present in the moment
- Trust and inclusiveness is important!
- P.S. Let’s get drinks!

### WORST

- Hold a job to the last minute then give me the job and tell me it is “urgent” and needs to be completed right away
- With attitude and anger
- Demanding
- No recognition of others
- Not my monkey, not my circus
- State of being overwhelmed
- No personalization (say hi!)
- Unreasonable time and directions and expectations
- We don’t appreciate surprises
- Not having all the information

## How do you feel your talents would be best used in a group situation? (Controlling vs. Supportive)

### For the “CONTROLLING” Communication Style

- Our talents would be best used in a group solution to problem solve, redirecting conversation to the outcome, and delegating responsibilities.
- Adhering to desired outcomes and objectives while considering differing points of view. Taking responsibility for decisions and taking action.
- Coaching to the answer, making sure that people feel heard, and “Done.”
- Sees the big picture, keeps group on-task and works towards objectives.
- Delegate, get ‘er done-want to move forward. Herd to the end. Moving project forward. Pragmatic, urgent. Get everybody on board, what are the tracks? Compromise. Define what counts – prioritization. Two tracks: urgent-pragmatic; non-urgent-settle prioritization, compromise, herders to keep on task.
- Organizing and leading, facilitating, mediating, empowering the group, keeping group focused, identifying roles (talents) within a team / group
- Project manager who can oversee the project, manage the timeline, facilitate discussions, encourage participation, and have the tough conversations. Get it done!
- Program / Project Manager: Facilitator, organizer, coordinating resources, lead, responsibility, driving momentum, strategic planning, motivator, promoting ideas.

### For the “SUPPORTIVE” Communication Style

- We are great facilitators! Basically, we rock! We are calm, peacemakers. We promote teamwork and support the whole group. We are approachable and non-threatening. We are good with detail behind the scenes.
- Identifying / surfacing alternative perspectives / perceptions / experiences in order to work toward a goal.
- Listen to everyone, be creative, collaboration-share ideas, willing to be more honest, leads to more compromise and support, open to changes.
- Bringing people together and assigning individuals tasks that fit their talents and interests.
- Finding common ground
- Encourages productivity, coaching to assist others to achieve outcomes, facilitative
- Natural nurturer
- Collaboration—Building partnerships by getting feedback from the entire team to bring consensus to the decision.