

Is your personality getting in the way of your communications efforts?

In its most basic form, communications happens when there is a dialogue between two people. Yet, how often do we see miscommunication instead of communication? Or one person shouting down the other? Or one person getting offended? Often, personality is behind miscommunication.

Over the weekend, I watched part of a panel presentation regarding civility in politics on CSPAN. One of the panelists said that civil communication only occurs when one person speaks and the other listens (and vice versa). It seems pretty straightforward, but in most communications efforts I see every day, it isn't happening. In many cases, it comes down to personality traits that impede true communication. These are:

- Arrogance
- Self-involvement
- Narcissism
- Insecurity

Your personality can make or break your communications efforts. Arrogant people will dismiss or debase your concerns, questions and input. Self-involved or narcissistic people will only focus on their own concerns. Insecure people will exaggerate their own accomplishments and/or put down yours or seek a way to make you look stupid.

I see examples of these personalities every single day on Twitter (people who never engage with other people are self-involved or those who don't credit others may be insecure). And corporations are not immune, since corporations are run by people (although they aren't people in spite of what Mitt

Romney may think).

WTOP conducted a poll which found that Pepco's customers were more dissatisfied than those of other utilities. In my opinion, this has to do with Pepco's arrogant communications efforts (generated by a company led/managed by arrogant people).

Do you agree? Are there other personality traits that affect communications? Please let me know in the comments.

When ego and attitude derail your marketing efforts

Personality matters in marketing, especially if you are marketing yourself. Personality affects the tone of your marketing efforts, and in the case of ego, what you highlight and what you don't.

Since personality and ego are well, personal, we often don't discuss them as part of our communications strategy. But we should. Having a bad attitude or an insufferably big ego can and will derail marketing and communications efforts.

What do I mean? Perhaps by now you have heard of the fracas that has ensued from the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation's decision to defund Planned Parenthood. I am not going to discuss the politics of it, but I will discuss the communications aspect of it. Komen did not handle communications well at all. Planned Parenthood actually took the news and made it into a fundraising point, while Komen was

silent. Not even answering calls from the news media (they provided no comment to CBS Evening News for example). Komen has also been deleting negative comments from its Facebook page.

It seems as though Komen did not anticipate or prepare for the backlash of this decision, and therefore has allowed its critics to transform the message (Komen is playing politics with women's lives). Why? In my opinion, Komen is a victim of big ego. Komen seems to believe that because it is such a large, and up to now, well respected, organization, that its donors will support whatever it does. But Komen miscalculated. Komen allowed ego to get in the way of having a smart communications strategy that would explain its decision, defend it and keep supporters happy.

It is important to remember that companies and organizations are run by individuals, who have attitudes and personalities that influence how they act.

On an individual level, attitude is even more important when marketing. Last week, I attended an alumni event for my graduate school institution. As I was sitting and eating my appetizers, I saw a guy whom I recognized as an alum of my undergraduate institution.

Me: "Didn't you go to [name of school]?"

Him: "Yes."

Me: "I thought I recognized you."

Him: [no comment]

Then I noticed that the other woman at the table had graduated from law school the same year as this guy (both had name tags with the name of the school and grad year). I pointed it out to both of them. She immediately tried to figure out if there was any connection. He didn't. As we continued this

increasingly painful exchange, I asked him what law firm he works for. It turns out he is looking for a job in government and is doing tax preparation in the meantime.

If he had a better attitude, perhaps I would try to see if I know of any resources for him. But instead this man has a tremendously bad attitude, left a bad impression and apparently does not understand what networking is and what it can do for you.

Your attitude matters because it determines how people react to you. If you have ever worked at a large organization with people at its helm that have big egos and/or bad attitudes, you know this impacts how the organization communicates and markets itself. It could be that the CEO/President is a narcissist and thinks that all press releases should quote him/her. It could be that the VP of Communications shuts down any creative idea if it differs from his/her own. And so forth.

Next time you have a marketing/communications failure, check to see if attitude, personality or ego had anything to do with it.

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