

The two actions that will make your communications more effective

There are two actions that will improve your communications efforts. These are:

- **Listening** (really listening, not just nodding your head)
- **Saying what you mean**

It sounds absurdly simple, but chances are that you are not doing one or both well.

Listening is crucial.

Yesterday, I went to a large home improvement store (I won't name names). I was on the search for an edger/trimmer for my pocket-sized lawn. I have never bought this item and I have no idea what I need. I flagged down an associate and I explained that I have a small lawn, and that the grass is hard to cut near the fence, and that I did not want to spend too much money. So this associate points me to the high end trimmers, starting at \$100. And then he says to me: "well, you said you wanted to cut your shrubs." Huh? I said NOTHING about shrubs since I don't have shrubs. Clearly, this associate was not listening. He was also not very qualified to talk about edgers, but that is a different story.

If you don't listen, you are not going to "get" the story, whatever it may be.

The other side of the communications equation is **saying what you mean**. Lots of people (and organizations) say what they think the other person (or their target audience) wants to hear. Saying what you mean is not burying things in fine print or in if-thens. **Be clear! And please, be sincere.** People can

tell when you are not saying what you mean. And then they don't trust you.

Mattress stores don't say what they mean

A great example of communications that don't say what they mean is mattress store advertisements. Having just gone through mattress shopping, I can tell you, just ignore the ads. They are designed to entice you into the store. Once you are in the store, you find out the real deal. Generally in the world of mattress sales, the enticement is free something or the other (free box spring, free delivery, free set-up, free TV, etc.). The reality is that the pricing is structured so that you can't compare it to other stores, and there are caveats. If you get a mattress priced over \$X, then you get free delivery. If you want to price match, we have to make sure it is the same mattress (and since mattresses are made specifically for each store, there is no exact same name). If you want us to remove your old bed, then we charge you a fee. If you want the ten-year warranty, then you have to buy our overpriced mattress cover. And on and on.

No clarity. No saying what they mean. Making people distrust what you are saying. That is not communications!

It is about effective communications. Effective means that something is successful in achieving the intended result. If you are intending to sell mattresses or edgers or any product, service or opinion, you should both listen and say what you mean.

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