



Where world class communications meet superior customer service

D&M Communicator

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

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From The Desk Of The President

Spring has sprung and if your life is as hectic as mine, when not at work you are running from one activity to the next. Some days its my son's baseball or flag football, other days its my daughter's cheerleading competitions, and the list goes on and on.

Wouldn't it be nice if once in a while we slowed down long enough to appreciate those things we work so hard for.

While I have a habit of saying I am going to stop and smell the roses, I never do — until now!



Steven Gerhardt,
President, D&M
Enterprise Group

What changed that I now find I can take a brief breather? It's my staff! After years of working together and learning each other's strengths and

weaknesses, we are a formidable team. In fact, if you have dealt with a D&M employee I am sure you will agree that Team D&M is up to any task you can throw at us. Don't believe me? Call us at 732-335-5510 and challenge us to help you. Than sit back and get ready to be wowed.

We look forward to receiving your call.

Steve

What Clients Don't Want to Hear & What To Say Instead

Think about the words you and those you work with use when talking with current and potential clients. Are you saying anything that could offend clients? What should you be saying?

Here are six common language blunders, with the comments you and your staff should be making instead:

1. I'm surprised you haven't heard about our product.

Why that's wrong: It sounds condescending, arrogant, and insulting, implying that the prospect is ignorant. **Better statement:** Since you said our product is unfamiliar to you, I'll take a couple of minutes to describe it and answer your questions.

2. That's not my job.

Why that's wrong: Not only do you avoid handling a customer's problem yourself, you offer no solution from anyone. **Better**

statement: I know just the person who can help you with that problem, and I'll introduce you to her.

3. Sorry, it's closing time, so I can't talk with you now.

Why that's wrong: Indicates that you work by the clock, not by commitment to customer needs.

Better statement: As you can see, the store is closing now, but I will be glad to stay around a few minutes until we meet your need.

4. To schedule delivery, let me see when I'm going to be in your neighborhood next week.

Why that's wrong: Shows that you have your convenience as the decisive factor in scheduling, not the customer's convenience. **Better statement:** Yes, we can deliver this to you next week. What day and time will suit you best?

5. You're the first person who has complained about our service.

Why that's wrong: Implies that the customer is a grouch and trouble-

maker, and that your company could not possibly be wrong. **Better statement:** Even though we hear plenty of compliments about our service, we know there's always room for improvement, so I'm grateful that you reported this problem.

6. Tell me your name again, and what the problem is.

Why that's wrong: Shows that you didn't listen carefully, and this will infuriate a person who is dissatisfied already. **Better statement:** Mr. Adams, as I understood you, your car's air conditioning isn't cooling adequately. Right?

A closing suggestion: Take this list to your next staff or employee meeting. Use the list as a springboard for discussion. Challenge your group to identify other offensive statements, and agree on suitable replacements. Your customers will welcome the refreshingly new climate of courtesy and consideration that permeates your work force.

Are You Getting The Info You Need?

One of the worst feelings a manager, executive, or supervisor can experience is that dreadful sinking feeling that occurs when it is discovered that something bad you should have known about wasn't conveyed to you in a timely way. It could be a complaint from a customer that wasn't reported to you, it could be that a pet project of the person who works for you is going badly, but nobody bothered to tell you. Or, it could be some sort of personal problem of a staff member that is affecting the work of your unit, unbeknownst to you.

You can't be everywhere and you can't know everything, but not getting the bad news you need when you need it is a major problem. You look foolish, ignorant, or "out of it," regardless of who might be at fault for the lack of communication. Not a great way to enhance a developing career particularly if your boss is also embarrassed. In other practical terms, that which you know nothing about cannot be addressed, and timeliness is important. Sometimes late is just as bad as never!

Why People Don't Tell

Before we talk about some specific steps you can apply to encourage people to give you the bad news when you need it, it is good to understand some of the reasons why people hesitate to do so. There are different sets of reasons: individual psychological reasons; reasons pertaining to your own everyday behavior; and organizational culture reasons.

People vary in the degree to which they are comfortable communicating bad news. Some people, for example, have difficulty tolerating conflict and associate bad news with conflict situations. Others will hesitate because of embarrassment—because they feel responsible (even when they

may not be). Others may feel that they can "fix" the problem before it has to go to you. The same processes that apply to family "secrets" and bad news apply in the workplace. Unfortunately, there isn't much you can do to counteract these individual differences directly.

The second source of hesitancy is your own behavior. If you tend to display your emotions easily, you may be intimidating staff when there is bad news to share...you may simply be making it easier for them to keep quiet and hope it blows over, rather than addressing and fixing the problem. In short, your personal style may be sufficiently emotional to scare off at least some people.

If your focus is on blame rather than on problem-solving, you will also be less "in the loop." Managers who are perceived as problem-solvers are less likely to intimidate staff into silence.

Even your general communication approach affects what you will hear and not hear. If you are generally attentive and appear interested, then you will be more likely to get what you need. If you convey the idea that you are busy, overwhelmed, or uninterested, then staff are more likely to try not to "bother you" with what, to them, might appear like little things. Sometimes those little things are issues you really need to know about in advance.

Organizational culture issues can also intimidate staff into silence, and they line up pretty much like the factors we described regarding your own personal behavior. If your larger organization has a history of avoidance of conflict, secrecy, blaming, intimidation, and denial, then it is more likely that staff will keep silent as much as possible.

What Can You Do?

The best way to encourage more sharing of bad news is to address your own behaviors.

Below are a number of suggestions.

1. Learn the distinction between blame and problem-solving. When bad news comes around, first address the problem (e.g., how can we get the project done), rather than spend your time determining who has screwed up. If it is absolutely necessary to determine where the fault occurred, don't look just for a person to "hang the problem on." Use the incident as an opportunity to PREVENT further occurrences rather than to assign blame. This approach tells staff that they aren't going to get dumped on if they bring you bad news.

2. Consider your own emotional expression. Some people express both their pleasure and displeasure very openly while others come across as more reasoned and calm. There isn't really a right or wrong here, but if you tend to be on the flamboyant side emotionally, consider toning it down a bit. Why? Because strong expressions of emotion can frighten people, particularly those over whom you hold some degree of power.

3. Work on creating a culture that values both finding and solving problems. The best way to do that is to model the attitude with staff consistently. When YOU make a mistake, share that mistake, accepting responsibility, and model the problem-solving process. That might mean explaining what actions you will take to avoid making the same error again. That's what you want from staff, and you need to demonstrate it consistently.

4. Some organizations like to open staff meetings with a discussion of some "triumph" that has occurred since the last meeting—a job well done, or some other success. The idea, of course is to celebrate accomplishments, and that makes sense. Consider though that while this may be somewhat morale heightening, its

effect is limited if there are other unspoken problems occurring. Successes do not counter-balance screw-ups. What really increases morale is fixing the screw-ups so they don't happen anymore.

Another approach is to open each meeting with a "hassle-hunting" process, where you spend a small amount of time identifying problems, complaints, etc. that have come up since the last meeting, and working to overcome them. This technique is used in some hospitality sector organizations (like hotels). Again the focus is on bringing problems to light so they can be fixed. Of course, you can still celebrate successes, but you will contribute to a more open culture by encouraging continuous improvement.

5. Managing understanding is an important part of ensuring that you get the bad news you need. One reason staff don't come forward with bad news is that they do not understand the significance or importance of some things that occur. Your view of events may be different...what may seem important to you may seem trivial to staff. So it is always useful to clarify what kinds of information you need, when you need it, and WHY you need it. The why is important because it helps cement your needs psychologically in the minds of your staff—it helps them remember.

6. Related to managing understanding is determining the kinds of information your boss needs...after all part of your job is to provide information to him or her, just as part of your staff's job is to inform you. So it is useful to take the initiative to clarify the information needs of your boss, particularly with respect to bad news. Then, pass on what you have learned to your staff.

7. Finally, if your organization has a history of secrecy or avoidance of problems and conflict, recognize that it is going to take some time for that culture to change. The key here is your consistency, and how you handle bad news. Make it worthwhile and safe for staff to talk to you and you will get what you need when you need it.

Cut Costs To Increase Profits

What do you think is easier to do ... reduce your expenses by 2% or double your sales? I think most would agree that reducing expenses might be easier. Why, then, do most business owners spend little time on attempting to reduce expenses? Consider this: Your current profit margin is 2% - if you reduce costs by 2% your profits double! Of course, you can do the same thing by merely DOUBLING your sales! Right.

It is amazingly simple to reduce operating costs by a few percent by being diligent. This article will provide you with a listing of some of the specific ways in which operating costs may be reduced. You may find that you can reduce spending considerably by observing only a few of the suggestions. And remember, the small stuff adds up! Think about saving each time you spend and you will discover your own ways to save.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Comparison-shop for everything. Negotiate whenever possible. Ask! You will be surprised at how frequently a vendor will negotiate a price. Attempt to negotiate EVERY purchase. Utilize mail order. It's quick and frequently the best prices are available via catalog sales.

Use the Internet to research a purchase. Nearly every vendor has a website containing product, pricing, and ordering information. This can be a tremendous time saver. Also, your research may lead you to a less expensive alternate.

TRAVEL

Save and monitor your frequent flyer miles. Use them whenever possible. Also require your employees to return miles earned on company business back to the company. Consider a travel club. Many provide discounts that you cannot obtain as an individual. Try to combine travel, hotel, and automobile rental into a single package. This can frequently save you money.

LEGAL

Before you decide to pursue a course of legal action, consider the chances of being sued in return! This might result in greater costs than you would receive from your initial action. Consider arbitration or mediation as an alternate course of action to resolve a legal problem. This can produce quicker results at less cost. Get your attorney involved early in any possible crisis.

UTILITIES

Monitor energy usage. Utilize auto-setback thermostats and auto-off light switches. Have an energy audit performed by your local utility company. Their suggestions can save you considerable expense over time. Ensure all employees are "energy aware." Start a contest and give a prize to the employee who provides the best suggestion for saving energy.

SHIPPING, MAILING

Educate yourself about the various postal rates. Visit the USPS website at <http://www.usps.gov> for complete descriptions of mailing options and rates. If you use a postage meter, ensure authorized personnel lock it when not in use. Note that the Post Office will refund any machine imprints that were not used.

Plan your shipping or mailings to avoid overnight or second day delivery that is MUCH more expensive than ordinary methods. If you must ship overnight, check various carriers as well as the post office for the best rates. When providing customers with literature (sales, technical, or other printed information), use e-mail or FAX if possible.

INSURANCE

Ensure your company (or personal) vehicles are classified properly for maximum savings. Review your coverage to ensure you are not "double insuring." Do an annual insurance review to make certain you have coverage you need but are not carrying something unnecessary. Have an effective safety program! Just ONE workplace accident can send your insurance rates skyrocketing. Make certain that all employees are classified properly for workers' compensation insurance. Rates vary widely. Shop for all your insurance needs and periodically ask for competitive bids.

MISCELLANEOUS

Monitor office supplies. My guess is that at any moment you have twice what you need! Purchase office supplies from discount suppliers. Shop by mail. There are numerous discount mail order suppliers. Get on their mailing lists so that you are notified of their sale items. Time your purchases to take advantage of these discounts.

Most importantly, call your D&M Project Manager and ask if there is anything we can do to lower your voice, data, and Internet fees. We can be reached at 1-732-335-5510.

“Did You Hear About...”

There was once a man and woman who had been married for more than 60 years.

They had shared everything. They had talked about everything. They had kept no secrets from each other except that the little old woman had a shoe box in the top of her closet that she had cautioned her husband never to open or ask her about.

For all of these years, he had never thought about the box, but one day the

little old woman got very sick and the doctor said she would not recover.

In trying to sort out their affairs, the little old man took down the shoe box and took it to his wife's bedside. She agreed that it was time that he should know what was in the box. When he opened it, he found two crocheted doilies and a stack of money totaling \$25,000.

He asked her about the contents. "When we were to be married," she said, "my grandmother told me the secret of a happy mar-

riage was to never argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you, I should just keep quiet and crochet a doily."

The little old man was so moved, he had to fight back tears. Only two precious doilies were in the box. She had only been angry with him two times in all those years of living and loving. He almost burst with happiness. "Honey," he said, "that explains the doilies, but what about all of this money? Where did it come from?"

"Oh," she said, "that's the money I made from selling the doilies."

The Age Of Turbulence By Alan Greenspan

Book Review: He had great credentials when President Ronald Reagan nominated him to be chief of the Federal Reserve in 1987. Just 69 days into Alan Greenspan's term, however, the Dow dropped by 508 points and 22 percent (if the stock market average dropped 22 percent today, the Dow would lose about 3,000 points). The financial system was close to a financial panic, but that didn't happen, not then and not during his five terms as Fed chairman.

In his book *The Age of Turbulence*, Greenspan says the effect of 9/11 was far different. Not much happened at all. He knew then that the world of a global capitalist economy is more resilient and fast-changing than it was in 1987.

Previous to his tenure, it was assumed

that an unemployment rate below 6 percent would trigger inflation. Greenspan believed the New Economy would prevent that. In 1995 and 1996, he convinced the Federal Open Market Committee to leave interest rates low in spite of falling unemployment. He was right. The unemployment rate fell below 4 percent in the 1990s without causing inflation.

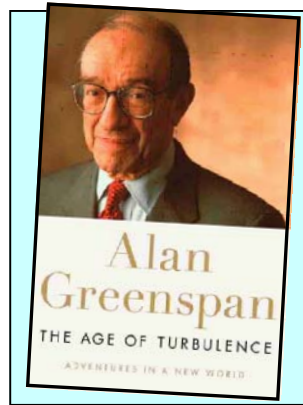
Some economists blame the post 9/11 interest rate cuts for cheap money that wound up in the real estate market. Greenspan says the blame lies less with the

Fed and more with investors' demand for high-yielding debt like subprime mortgage bonds.

His 531-page book provides glimpses of his life, including several less well-known aspects. Greenspan started playing the clarinet at age

12 and later studied at Julliard School of Music. He played professionally in the Henry Jerome band in 1944 before deciding on a career in economics. In 1948, he graduated summa cum laude from New York University and later earned a master's degree and a Ph.D. He co-founded Townsend-Greenspan & Co., an economic consulting firm. In 1974, President Ford named him chairman of the Committee on Social Security Reform.

The Age of Turbulence by Alan Greenspan, Penguin Press, 531 pages, \$35.



Sales Tip Of The Month

In the notes section of your contact file, keep data on your client's personal life, i.e., number of kids and their names, your client's birthday, hobbies, location of last vacation, etc.

About D&M

Founded in 2001, D&M Enterprise Group has thousands of satisfied clients. D&M utilizes a consultative approach to thoroughly examine every aspect of each client's telecommunications needs and then recommend specific cost-saving and performance-enhancing solutions. We specialize in medium to large-scale applications that include DS3, T1, as well as phone equipment installations.

As independent telecommunications experts, we have the luxury of offering our clients objective advice that truly serves their best interests. Once our clients' telecommunications needs are identified, we match these needs with the services offered by more than 20 of the nation's leading carriers and equipment manufacturers we represent. Because we have the ability to select from a wide variety of carriers and equipment, we can guarantee our clients that they are getting the **best solution** available at the **lowest possible cost**.

HOW WE DO IT: D&M does all the comparison shopping for you! Using proprietary software, D&M analyzes your existing communication, Internet, and data transfer usage. Once this analysis is complete, a comprehensive, customized proposal is prepared that shows the savings you can expect from competing carriers who can provide the same, or in some cases, superior service, at a lower price. Based on your needs, D&M will also recommend service and equipment changes that will save you money too.

In addition, D&M uses proprietary software, which we call our COMMauditor system, to analyze every invoice to ensure you are being charged at the contracted rate and that you are not charged for equipment or services that were canceled or never ordered. We also track all your telephony assets and vendor agreements.

The combination of increasing the efficiency of your business by ensuring you are using the proper services and equipment, along with monitoring your bills for accuracy, guarantees your company will be performing at maximum efficiency without overspending.

As your single point of contact, D&M makes it easy for you to spend your valuable time running your business while we make sure your telecommunications, Internet and data transfer needs are being supplied by the highest quality providers at the lowest possible cost.



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