

COMMUNICATION SNACKS

52 BITE-SIZED
COMMUNICATION TIPS
FOR THE BUSY PROFESSIONAL

Marc J. Musteric & Blythe J. Musteric

Communication Snacks:
52 Bite-Sized Communication Tips for the Busy Professional
Marc J. Musteric & Blythe J. Musteric

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Introduction

When I was 16 years old, I accidentally dropped a large table on a BMW. I was carrying the table through a hotel parking lot as part of my summer job. I lost my balance and dropped the table. It broke the BMW's side mirror clean off. I immediately knew I had made a huge mistake. The rest of that day was tough, but I apologized, I got through the day, and I kept my job.

Sometimes communication is like this. You make a big mistake, but you know what you've done wrong. You apologize, and you move on. Often, however, communication mistakes are not so obvious. Was your presentation really that great, or was the audience just being polite? Was the email you sent offensive? Did you use that semicolon correctly? Even when you recognize that you've made a communication mistake, you may not know how to fix it. This can be a big problem.

As you progress in your career from entry level employee to manager to executive, communication becomes increasingly important. Your success depends on your ability to persuade, build consensus, and inspire. It also depends on your ability to quickly recognize your communication mistakes and correct them.

We wrote this book for you, the busy professional. It covers key areas of communication, including interpersonal communication, intercultural communication, grammar, and presentations. The goal is to give you tips for communicating more effectively and show you how to avoid making serious

communication mistakes. We call these tips **Communication Snacks**. Think of them as your communication nourishment for the next 52 weeks. If you feed your communication skills, they will grow, develop, and improve, and you will grow professionally as a result.

How to Use This Book

Each Communication Snack is a single bite-sized tip, just one or two pages long, written in practical, easy-to-digest language. The tips move fluidly (and somewhat randomly) between various communication topics. This is on purpose. We want you to experience the tips much like you experience communication in your daily life. We also want you to be a bit surprised (and delighted) as you move through the book and explore the tips. (Of course, if you are looking for tips on a specific topic, you can always take a look at the topic index on page 105.) We hope you will pick up the book once a week, read a Communication Snack, and spend a few minutes thinking about how you might apply that tip to your work.

For more than ten years, we have been helping professionals in Silicon Valley communicate with one another. Thousands of people move here every year from around the US and around the world. As a result, Silicon Valley is a rapidly changing sea of cultures, concepts, and connections. These 52 Communication Snacks have helped our clients sort through the frequent miscommunications that occur in this dynamic, multicultural Silicon Valley ecosystem. Some of our clients have carried these tips with them to the highest levels of the executive suite. We hope you like them too. Happy snacking!

Marc J. Musteric and Blythe J. Musteric

1

Set a Communication Goal for the Next 52 Weeks

Improving your communication skills can be tricky. Why not start by setting a communication improvement goal? Ask yourself these two questions:

- 1. What is one area or situation where I feel uncomfortable or inarticulate when communicating?**
- 2. How would my life or career be better if I could communicate more effectively in this situation?**

By answering these questions, you will (1) identify an area where you need improvement and (2) find a source of motivation by connecting your goal with positive changes in your life or career.

As you read through these Communication Snacks over the next 52 weeks, think about how they relate to your goal. If you would like to attack your goal more directly, take a look at the topic index on page 105. This index should help you identify which Communication Snacks will help you reach your goal.

2

How to Sound Confident

Sounding confident involves being mindful of your voice. Focus on your voice as if it were the only tool you had to get your message across. The following techniques will help you use your voice effectively and confidently:

Control Your Voice

Before you speak, relax your voice by taking a few deep breaths, counting to three as you exhale slowly. When you speak, choose the appropriate volume for your room size.

Use Falling Intonation

To make convincing statements, your intonation (voice pitch) should fall at the ends of your sentences. A rising voice pitch sounds uncertain.

Slow Down

Many speakers speak too quickly during speeches and presentations. It is natural to speed up when you are nervous, so be careful! Write “SLOW DOWN” in your notes or tell someone in the audience to motion to you if you are speaking too quickly.

Speak in Full Sentences

It is easy for your mind to start moving faster than your mouth. Be patient and allow yourself to complete your sentences before moving on to the next thought. Completing your sentences will help you stay focused on your topic.

Tip: Record yourself giving a speech or presentation. Listen to the recording. Do you hear confidence in your voice? If not, practice until you are satisfied with the way you sound.