Improved Communications Means
Improved Franchise Relations

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Since individual relationships are the fundamental basis to a successful business, excellent communication is essential to a successful business relationship. This publication, “Best Practices in Communication,” stands as the latest in a series of publications that began in 1992 with the “Franchise Relations Handbook.” The aim of this publication is to instruct on the most effective ways to communicate. We trust that this publication will help you avoid, if not at least mitigate, those critical dispute issues in your franchise relationships that arise from poor communications between franchisors and franchisees.

The value of improved communication is to bring greater understanding. As the practices in this publication are followed, they will help you communicate more effectively. Even small changes can bring about significant returns.
Why Do We Need to Improve Communications?

Our working environment is changing. There is a growing emphasis on team management and empowerment of employees. In order to be effective and productive with these changes, you need to be an excellent communicator.

In the franchise world, the relationship that exists between the franchisor and the franchisee is also growing and changing. For this relationship to achieve its objectives, each party needs the fundamentals of good communication. Every franchise system, no matter how large or small, needs to provide avenues for franchisees to share ideas, questions, or concerns with franchisors. Moreover, franchisees need some assurance their ideas will be taken seriously, otherwise learning how to communicate effectively and spending the resources to create an effective way to communicate will be wasted.

*Communication* means a mutual understanding between two or more parties. It is the method used to convey a message or to achieve a “meeting of the minds.” The purpose of any message can be to convey information, develop relationships, or help in making a decision. In today’s world of electronic communication, a person’s interpersonal and writing skills are now as important as their technical skills.

Excellent interpersonal skills suggests you:
- Know your audience.
- Anticipate how they will respond.
- Know what you want to communicate.
- Be direct and succinct in your delivery.
- Use questions to discover how well you communicate.
- Clarify any confusion.
- Restate your message.
- Remember individuals absorb information differently.

Respect and sincerity are necessary for a successful outcome where a message is conveyed in a clear manner. If not, a different message may be received to the detriment of both parties. Researchers have determined that more information is conveyed nonverbally than verbally, which is why written communication lacks valuable information normally sent by the tone of the voice, gestures, facial expressions, stance, pauses, i.e., nonverbal communication. *Question: What can we conclude from this research? Is verbal communication always better?*
Here’s an example of what can happen if one little bit of information is left out while giving instructions:

*While building the English Channel, the train contractor asked how they should test for the impact of a large bird while traveling at top speed. They were instructed to shoot a chicken from a cannon at the front of the train. When they did, the chicken went through the windshield and the engineer’s cabin. When reporting the results, the question was asked, “Did you thaw the chicken?”*

Franchise systems typically use several different methods of communication. These include: Verbal, written, electronic, multi-media, and via third parties. However, most systems use only one or two of these instead of integrating them all into a comprehensive communications program.

**An Effective Communications Plan is Essential to a Successful Franchise System**
Survey of Franchisors and Franchisees
Conducted by the IFA

In preparation for writing this paper, the IFA surveyed both franchisors and franchisees to determine the best methods of communicating in a franchise system. The survey focused on the frequency and methods used. In addition, each method was rated on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the best). The questions and results were as follows:

**In the survey, franchisors were asked:** Considering all the different methods your system uses to communicate with your franchisees, list all that are used by your system. Their answers were as follows:

Franchisors used several different methods of communication and delivered their messages in a number of different formats, all of which are listed below:

- **Verbal**
  - Speeches
  - Interviews
  - Individual support visits
  - Telephone calls
  - Announcements
  - Telephone support via an 800 number
  - Teleconferencing
  - Presentations
  - Training and motivation seminars
  - Annual conventions
  - CEO updates
  - Strategic planning meetings
  - End-of-term and renewal seminars
  - Manuals
  - Charts
  - Graphs

- **Electronic**
  - E-mail
  - Discussion boards
  - Web site
  - Web-conferencing
  - Power-Point presentations
  - Videos
  - Audiocassettes
  - Teleconferencing
  - An intranet
  - Multimedia

- **Written**
  - Bulletins
  - Newsletters
  - Faxes
  - Contracts
  - Proposals
  - Letters
  - Memos
  - Notices
  - Reports
  - Minutes
  - Policies and procedures

- **Via third parties**
  - The Franchise Advisory Council
  - Peer mentoring
  - Dealing with a single liaison at headquarters
  - Focus groups
  - A facilitator
  - A mediator
  - An arbitrator
  - An attorney
Next, the survey asked franchisors: What are the most effective ways to communicate to your franchisees, in priority? Their answers were as follows:

1. E-mail
2. Phone calls
3. Individual support visits
4. Fax

Franchisees were also asked to rank these formats and did so in the following order:

1. Phone calls
2. E-mail
3. Fax
4. Individual support visits

The highest rated methods can be categorized as electronic, paper, voice, or personal visits. This means there isn’t one most effective way in communicating. All methods need to be used for the best results. In addition, it is important to communicate the same message using as many methods as possible because people tend to receive messages in different ways, just as some people learn more effectively by reading than by on-the-job training.

The survey also identified that franchisors rated their communication twice as effective as did franchisees, which is a reason for concern. Why this difference exists is not clear. However, the fact that franchisors believe they are communicating more clearly than they really are means there will likely be a future breakdown in communication. As a result, this increases the chances of future problems in the franchise relationship.

This means that getting regular feedback from the franchisees about how to improve your own communication methods is essential to maintaining an effective communications program. Many systems do an annual survey in order to measure the value of their franchise support. Some will ask for a grade or a rating from 1-10. Then the average rating will be used as a baseline to measure future improvements to their franchise support.
There are many different ways to communicate. The following is a brief description of all the different methods and channels for communicating.

**Intranet Discussion Boards**
This Internet tool can provide the franchisees with the ability to get the advice of those more experienced. It can also provide a feeling of “real-time” support from the franchisor.

Some benefits include:
- Real-time networking, sharing best practices, and peer-to-peer training.
- Eliminating floating memos and stacks of paper.
- Building a spirit of community among franchisees.
- Instant access to pricing, ad campaigns, and announcements.
- Providing rapid feedback on the results of operating initiatives.
- Promoting various programs.
- Creating the forum for gaining consensus from the system.
- On-line “Quick Polls” about issues giving a feeling of participation.
- Linking suppliers and vendors to the system and expedites business.
- Creating an electronic marketplace allowing the placement of orders 24/7.
- Online training seminars conducted by suppliers and vendors.
- Creating synergy, excitement, and a boost to morale.
- Creating a competitive incentive for the system.

**Telephone calls**
A telephone call is quick, easy and inexpensive, and franchisees rated this the most effective way to communicate in the IFA survey. In taking a proactive approach to communicate by phone you demonstrate genuine care and concern.

One of the most effective phone calls a franchisor can provide is the conference call. By establishing a schedule of conference calls you can foster “Best Practices” and greater productivity. It also gives franchisees a ready avenue to interact with one another and regularly exchange ideas about issues important to the system.

**One point of contact at the Support Center**
There can be a real benefit in having one person at the corporate office with whom each franchisee consistently communicates. It can create security, personal service, and consistency. Consistency is more important than intensity.
**Franchise support visits**
Phone communication is so ubiquitous it has permitted fewer on-site visits. Adherence to standards, practices, and policies can be reviewed and monitored by phone, but the best communication is always direct and personal. Therefore, it is important to include visits to franchisees as an integral part of the communications/corporate outreach plan.

**Strategic planning sessions**
Strategic planning is the process of determining where the company is, where the company wants to go, and how and when it will get there. The strategic planning process requires the company to consider:

- Needs of customers.
- Challenges from competitors.
- Your own competitive advantages.
- Opportunities in your market niche.
- New innovations of your product or service.
- Market challenges.
- And many other issues.

Strategic planning sessions can be a collaborative effort involving key staff, management, consultants and franchisees. Together they create the strategic plan for the company. Franchisees should be a primary part of the process at all levels. They can assist in gathering information and decision-making on new initiatives.

**Training and motivation seminars**
These can be in a number of different modes, including an annual convention; annual sales seminar; regional meetings; teleconference calls; Web-based (WebEx type) training; video conferencing; audio and video tapes; e-mail; a Power-Point presentation; etc.

**Annual conventions**
This is a must for communicating with and within the system. Networking is one of the most effective ways for franchisees to learn best practices and new tips. Franchisors can communicate and reinforce strategies, new plans and products, and market changes.

Most systems have one convention a year. Many national companies seek to alternate from the eastern side of the United States to the western side. The meeting will typically be two to five days, including committee and board meetings.

General sessions are planned for everyone, at which the theme of a convention is presented and the scheduled events are discussed. These sessions give the leader of the company an opportunity to present their view and “State of the Company.”
Renewal or End-of-Term seminars
This is the one method that the franchisees identified in the IFA survey as being a very effective method of communication. The franchisors seemed to overlook this as a valuable communication tool. Seminars provide an ideal forum for real communication between the parties. This is a time when mutual goals and future plans can be developed. Seminars can be a one or two day event at the corporate office, or take place at a resort venue combined with some fun, recreational activities.

Advisory Councils
The Franchise Advisory Council (FAC) has long been recognized as an excellent way to communicate between franchisees and franchisor. When there is good leadership on the Council, much can be done to aid in the promotion and growth of a system. Many systems have a FAC meeting every quarter. One can be held at the annual convention and one at an annual sales meeting or regional meeting. Another way is to hold one at the corporate offices and one at a venue of the franchisees’ choice. If you are interested, IFA has a great guide to establishing a FAC called *Franchise Councils: Effective Two-Way Communications for Franchise Systems*.

Audio, video tapes and CDs
Communicating electronically can provide a way for the recipient to receive the communication while at home, in the car, at the office, jogging, or virtually anywhere. Electronic communication offers a wide range of flexibility, from recording of convention sessions, training classes, workbook training, e-learning, streaming video, video and audio cassettes and CDs, to name a few.

Franchisee Support Center with 800 number
Almost every franchise system offers an 800 number to use when calling into the corporate Support Center. This provides franchisees a way to call at no cost, encouraging constant communication. Many franchisees also provide their customers with a toll-free 800 number.

CEO/President’s updates
It has been said, “The shadow of the leader is cast across the length, width and breadth of his or her jurisdiction.” The one person with the most power and impact within an organization is the leader, the number one man or woman at the helm. Communication from this individual is of the utmost importance. The CEO has a variety of ways to communicate but the best method is one-on-one.

Interaction and focus groups
A focus or interaction group of people from your organization can offer a variety of different viewpoints. For example, if you need to study a particular challenge or new opportunity, bring a small group together. Involvement is the key to communication. Of course, don’t do this unless you want to hear the answer. If you ignore the conclusions, this message that the decision makers are not interested in what others in the organization think about a proposal – only that they want to be appear to be concerned.
**Company Web site**
A well-planned and simple-to-use web site can communicate all needed information at one location. It may include:

- **Mission, vision, values, goals**

**Available information from the Support Center**
- People in management—positions/titles
- Support staff and job titles
- Job descriptions
- Phone numbers—E-mail addresses
- An organizational chart

**Training**
- Sales
- Administration
- Technology
- Product improvements
- Customer service methods

**Events**
- Calendared items
- Annual events
- Regional training
- Individual support visits
- Strategic planning sessions
  - Schedules/agendas
  - Minutes from previous meetings
  - Goals and controls

**Bulletins, newsletters, announcements**

**Archived publications**
- Previous surveys
- Newsletters, bulletins, sales training
- Previous communications

**Reference materials**
- Franchise agreement and handbook
- Best practices
- Approved vendors
- Current pricing
- Current costing of inventory and supplies
- Franchise directory
  - Franchise Advisory Council
- Addresses/phone numbers/E-mail addresses
Legal and compliance
  Renewal and end-of-term calendar
  Resale requirements

Franchises currently for sale

Individual franchise performance
  Charts, graphs, dashboard indicators

Hiring and recruiting methods and resources

Management report forms

Advertising materials and supplies

Public relations program and materials
  Press kit
  Media articles and publications
  Proactive media relations program

Marketing materials
  Brochures
  Forms
  Sales collateral
Communication—How to Calculate Its Worth and Benefit

*If I went back to college again, I would concentrate on two areas: learning to write and to speak in front of an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively.*

—President Gerald R. Ford

Our ever-changing world of information revolves around communication. Good communication is like good leadership…it’s easier to see than to measure. No one knows the worth of good communication. But, we do know the results of a lack of it. The cost of poor communication can be seen, felt, and measured in any company’s performance. This is especially true in franchise systems where making clear the hows and whys decisions made by the franchisor can be the difference between maintaining cordial system-wide relations and unhappy franchisees. Not only does franchise system management need to communicate effectively, so do those in customer service who interact with franchisees. Of course, franchisees need to learn how to effectively communicate their ideas or concerns with franchisors.

Increasingly, in order to be successful, everyone in the business world is required to develop good interpersonal skills. One must be able to work in cooperative teams and have good verbal communication skills. Today, it is every person’s job to increase productivity and profitability.

**The format of business is changing**—Here is why:

- A flattening management hierarchy.
- Self-directed teams and participatory management.
- Global competition.
- Communication technologies.
- Intellectual knowledge as an asset.

In today's business world, writing and speaking skills are being showcased as never before.

**Communicating methods**

In the world of communicating, four fundamental methods can achieve successful understanding.

- Speaking
- Listening
- Writing
- Reading
Verbal Communication
There are four different approaches people use in expressing themselves verbally.

- The aggressive approach.
- The appeasing approach.
- The subtle, but aggravating method.
- The assertive approach.

The aggressive approach—Least effective.
The aggressive approach is characterized by blaming, accusing, demanding, ordering, raising voice and using intimidating body language. “It’s my way or the highway,” or “You must...because I said so.”

The style itself blurs the real message. How you emphasize a point is the very thing that can either underscore or obscure it.

The appeasing or non-aggressive approach.
The appeasing or non-aggressive approach is characterized by a soft voice, overly agreeable attitude, having no point of view, avoidance, beating around the bush, and sounding hopeless or helpless. “I hate to bother you,” or “If that’s the way you want it.” This is the opposite method to the aggressive approach and also not very effective if one wants to communicate a clear point of view about something.

The passive-aggressive approach is subtle but aggravating.
“I knew that wouldn’t work,” or “How could you even think that?” People appear to agree, but they don’t really agree, sometimes by making subtle digs and sarcastic remarks that contradict their verbal message, they will also criticize after the fact.

Assertively speaking is the most effective means of communicating.
Assertive communicators have the ability to use language in its most powerful and positive form. They can organize their message so that their listeners positively understand it and clearly receive it. Remember, how you say things often carries more of the message than what you say.

To assertively introduce your message:
State the topic—Identify and introduce the main idea.
Provide context—Background of your topic or issue.
State your goal—What you want to accomplish.
Lay out the structure—List of areas you will cover.
Set the tone—Feeling or behavior you want to develop.
Prepare the listener for what they need to do—be ready to take action.
Recap—Summary of your main points.
Stating what you need—Invite understanding of what you need them to do.
Setting next steps—Set direction of each party.
Asking for agreement—Questions that seek confirmation.
Asking for commitment of action—Ask for agreement and commitment of action.
Dos and Don’ts

Facts, content and emotion all affect the meaning of the message. If any of these items are incorrect or inadequate, your message will be blurred. Below are important tips to make sure this does not happen to your franchise system!

Present solutions when speaking.

Own your message—“To me, it appears that this is happening,” or “I see this happening.”

Invite dialogue with questions—“Will someone please describe to us what you observed?”

Focus on solution terms—“Let’s take a look at some possible ways to solve this.”

Disagree without being disagreeable—Avoid problem-dwelling negative language such as “That won’t work here.”

Don’t use inflammatory words such as—Always, never, constantly, should, must, and need to.

Words that induce negative responses include—Not, can’t, won’t and don’t, try, maybe, perhaps, promise and policy.

These phrases prove to induce negative responses—“To be honest with you,” “You know what I mean?” “Trust me on this.”

Words that send mixed messages or that can be confusing include—but, however and although because they convey uncertainty.

Qualifier statements that negate your message—“I don’t like to have to tell you this…” “I don’t think you’ll understand this…” “Now don’t take this the wrong way…”

Credible communications—Your communications become more credible when you:

• Follow through with what you agree to do.
• Return phone calls promptly.
• You are passionate about your business and its progress.
• Demonstrate expertise in your field.
• Stay calm under pressure.
• Show your professionalism.
• Take positive approaches to problems.
• First listen and try to understand, then act.
• Show sincerity in your voice and manner.
• Be straightforward and direct. Be bold but not overbearing.
Helping your listener stay involved is critical to ensuring they understand your message. Use the following methods to keep their attention:

Use visual aids:
- Graphs.
- Charts.
- Handouts.
- Written reports.
- Pictures.
- Diagrams and drawings.
- Maps.
- Computer graphics.
- Articles.

Provide entertaining stories and anecdotes.
- Be short and to the point. This will strengthen your topic.

Add good sense to your humor.
- Have them laugh with you.
- Make light of your own situations.
- Make it fun for everyone, but don’t try to be a comedian.

Avoid the dangerous pitfalls. The following can obscure your message because they make some listeners feel uncomfortable and largely focus on these items instead of one’s main points:
- Sarcasm.
- Ridicule.
- Off-colored jokes.

Obtain feedback for evaluating how well your message was understood.
Ask open-ended questions:
- “What do you think?”
- “What are the pros and cons?”
- “Tell me your view on this issue.”
- “Give me your recommendation on this.”

Encourage questions and provide a positive reaction
- “That’s a good question.”
- “Thanks for asking.”
- “I am glad you asked that.”

Answer a question with a question for further clarification
- “Where is your concern originating from?”
- “What prompted your question?”
- “To make sure I’m clear, what is your understanding of...?”
Nonverbal Communication

Researchers say only 10 percent of communication comes from the words spoken. Another 30 percent is understood by the inflection of the voice, and 60 percent by our body language. Therefore, good communicators also consider the way their voices sound when they say things and their body language.

For example: “I never saw him kiss his wife.” You understand the words only…but if any one word is emphasized, you get a different meaning.

I never saw him kiss his wife. I didn’t, but maybe someone else did.
I never saw him kiss his wife. Absolutely, I didn’t see him kiss his wife.
I never saw him kiss his wife. I didn’t see it, but I heard it.
I never saw him kiss his wife. Well, if he didn’t, who did?
I never saw him kiss his wife. What else is going on here?
I never saw him kiss his wife. Whose wife did you see him kiss?
I never saw him kiss his wife. What’s going on here?

This is a good example of how something small can communicate a different message than what may have been intended.

Nonverbal Communication tips

Maintain good eye contact—look at the listener and maintain eye contact.

Posture—Carry yourself to reflect your message. Lean forward a bit.

Facial expression—Match the confidence and sincerity of your message with your facial expressions. Smile to add a positive tone.

Gestures—Use gestures to emphasize or punctuate key points. Develop a style of delivery with your hands.

Voice—Project your voice to be heard loud and clear. Show inflection in your voice. Add variety in the form of modulation. This will positively engage the attention of others.

Tone—Tone wraps up the volume and inflection in your voice. It conveys the feeling of your message. Genuineness and sincerity are projected with your tone. “I mean what I say, I say what I mean, and I do so with respect toward you.” Get your point across as productively as possible.

Pace—Manage the rate at which you speak. Enunciate your words clearly. Insert pauses occasionally in your message. Tune in on your listener’s communication style. If they speak fast, so can you. If they are slow and deliberative,
slow your pace to match, but not to mirror it.

Speaking in the positive—Be honest, direct and productive. Emphasize what is right and what you can do, not what can’t be done.

Clarity—Make your message short and sweet. Be concise by focusing on the main ideas first. Less is more. Avoid figures of speech, idioms and metaphors.

Time—The amount of time you spend with someone will communicate a strong nonverbal message. Spending 25 minutes with someone rather than five communicates the subject is very important to you.

Space—The distance or space between you and the listener can indicate care and concern. However, take careful consideration not to violate the cultural customs of your listener.
The Communication Process

**Sender has an idea or message to communicate**—Your message should be concise and direct. Supporting and explanatory information should then follow. If you are asking the receiver to act or respond then say so clearly. “By Friday, will you let me know how you will solve this challenge?”

One rule should always apply; never try to communicate when you are angry.

**Sender underscores the message**—Everything attached to your words re-enforces the message. It can be the volume, inflections and tone of your voice. It may be hand gestures or body language. The method you use to communicate sends its own message. For example, e-mail has less importance than does a personal telephone call.

**The message travels over a channel**—This is the medium used to send the message. Generally, it’s verbal, electronic or on paper. Anything that interferes with the message’s delivery is called noise. It can be spelling errors, poor grammar, distractive noise, or interruptions. This noise can hurt the creditability of the message or the sender.

**Receiver decodes the message**—The receiver has to perceive the message in order to determine its meaning. They will need to take into account the sender’s mood, background and position. Seeing the message from the point of view of the sender greatly aids in its decoding. Successful communication is evident when the receiver understands the intended meaning of the message.

**Feedback travels to the sender**—Feedback is the way the receiver can determine if they understood the meaning of the message. Paraphrasing is one good method, such as, “Let me try to explain that in my own words.” Asking find-out questions is a way for the sender to solicit feedback. For example, “Am I making myself clear?” or “Is there anything you don’t understand?”
**Listening**

One important part of communicating, which is often overlooked, is listening. However, research suggests people listen at only 25 percent efficiency and often miss key points in communications. Listening can be a very productive tool and one that effective communicators do well. This is because people who are good listeners have credibility with those delivering the message.

**Four ways to listen**

- Pretending to listen—allowing our minds to wander.
- Selective listening—Hearing only part of what is being said.
- Attentive listening—Focusing attention on the words from the point of view of the listener.
- Empathetic listening—Understanding the message from the sender’s point of view which is the most effective way. Listening from the frame of reference of the sender is empathetic listening. It involves understanding their circumstances emotionally as well as intellectually.

Empathetic listening is using the ears, eyes, and heart to look for the real meaning of what is being transmitted. This is not to be confused with sympathetic listening, which is a form of agreement or judgment.

**Why Aren’t We Better Listeners?**

- Physical barriers—It’s difficult to listen when you are tired, ill, worried, or uncomfortable. Noisy surroundings, hearing disabilities, and poor acoustics can also be barriers.

- Psychological barriers—A different set of cultural, ethical, and personal values are always part of each individual. These and our preconceived beliefs can hamper communication.

- Language problem—The use of clichés, slang, or local jargon can present unfamiliar words preventing your message from being delivered.

- Nonverbal distraction—Speaking too fast, inappropriate dress, and abnormal mannerisms all create distractions for listeners.

- Speed of thought—Most Americans speak at about 125 words per minute. The human brain can process information at least three times as fast. You see how easily our minds can wander and daydream. This prevents comprehending all that is being spoken or presented.
How Can We Become Better Listeners?

Become an active listener—Becoming an active listener will greatly enhance successful communication. Ways to actively listen include:

- Stop talking.
- Control your surroundings.
- Be receptive and open.
- Look for main points.
- Anticipate what's coming next.
- Judge ideas, not appearances or style.
- Take selective notes.
- Hold your response.
- Give productive feedback.

Good listening tips—How to get the most from a speaker's message

- Eliminate distractions.
- Take an interest in the speaker's message.
- Take notes.
- Listen for main ideas.
- Visualize the message.
- Speak-up when you're slipping, but be patient.
  --Paraphrase to capture the content:
  - “What you’re saying is…”
  - “In other words…”
  - “What you mean is…”
  - “What you’re telling me is…”
  - “If I understand your point correctly…”
  - “What I’m hearing you say is…”
- Clarify the uncertain or unclear.
  --Ask open-ended questions:
  - What: What does that mean to me?
  - How: How do you perform that new procedure?
  - Why: Why do you think the client opposes the idea we offered?
  - Explain: Explain your thinking on that issue.
  - Describe: Describe the features of that product.
  - Elaborate: Elaborate on the pros and cons of that strategy.
  - Give: Please give me an example of what you mean.
  - Tell: Tell me more about that.

Communicating with different cultural backgrounds. Knowing your audience is the first rule of speaking effectively. Appreciate the differences that exist within different cultures. Be aware of cross-cultural audiences. For effectiveness:

- Simplify—Use simple English.
- Clarify—Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Be proactive—Encourage feedback.
- Be happy—Remember to smile.
Writing as a Form of Communication

Writing and composition are crucial in today’s business world.

In developing your writing skills, write to your audience. Consider what you want them to get from your communication. Work to become:

Audience oriented—Put yourself in their position and visualize sitting and listening to your presentation. What are the barriers that might prevent your audience (or people) from listening and learning and which ones are within your control?

Purposeful in meaning—What are the main points and how can you effectively win your audience? What is it you want them to take from your remarks?

Economical in style—Speak in simple terms, using easy-to-understand phrases and words. Being concise is what counts. A writer once said, “I don’t have time to be concise!” It truly takes time to write in a concise, yet comprehensive, way.

The Writing Process

Three parts in the writing process
By organizing your thoughts before you begin to write, the message should be clearer and more concise. The following are widely accepted pre-writing guidelines:

Prewriting—25 percent of your time should be spent in prewriting.

- Anticipate how your audience will react.
- First profile your audience.
  - Who is my primary reader or listener?
  - What is my relationship with that person?
  - What position does the individual hold in the organization?
  - How much do they know about the subject?
  - What do I know about that person’s education, beliefs, culture, and attitudes?
Identify your purpose.
- Inform or persuade.
- Promote goodwill.

Ask, “What does the receiver need to know about this topic?”
- What is the receiver to do?
- How is the receiver to do it?
- When must the receiver do it?
- What will happen if the receiver doesn’t do it?

Select the best channel to communicate.
- Important factors.
  - Importance of the message.
  - Speed of feedback required.
  - Necessity of a permanent record.
  - Cost of the channel.
  - Degree of formality desired.
- Email
- Face-to-face conversation
- Telephone call
- Fax
- Group meeting
- Video or teleconferencing
- Memo
- Letter
- Report or proposal

Writing—25 percent of your time is spent in the actual writing of your message.
- Researching
- Organizing
  - Scratch list.
  - Outline format.
- Composing
  - Emphasizing reader’s benefits.
    - Compose with empathy.
    - Understand feelings.
    - Solve reader’s problems.
- Cultivating a “you” attitude
  - Emphasize second-person pronouns (you, your).
  - Empathy index is the number of second person “you” references in your message vs. number of first-person “I or we” references…better to have higher ratio of “you” than “I.”
- Use inclusive language
  - Sensitive communications avoid language that excludes people.
- Positive expressions and familiar words
  - Phrases that suggest, “You are important, I hear you, and I’m honestly trying to please you.”
□ Plain language.
  • Don’t inflate the writing style that obscures meaning: legalese, federalese, bureaucratese, doublespeak and official style. *Herein, thereafter, hereinafter, whereas* and similar expressions.

□ Gender use.
  • Be careful with the use of his or him…use “common gender.”
Examples of alternatives: *one, you, we, they, people, and employees.* Use warm, conversational tone…no slang or low-level diction.

**Unprofessional slang**
*(Low-level diction)*
*Badmouth*
*Guts*
*Pecking order*
*Rat on*
*Rip on*
*Ticked off*
*You guys*

**Conversational**
*(Mid-level diction)*
*Criticize*
*Nerve*
*Line of Command*
*Upset*
*Inform*
*Steal*

**Formal**
*(High-level diction)*
*Denigrate*
*Courage*
*Dominance hierarchy*
*Provoked*
*Betray*
*Expropriate*

□ Add graphics for emphasis
  • Charts, illustrations, diagrams, clipart, and artwork. A little humor always helps.

□ Sentence length…sentences with 20 or fewer words have the most impact.
Revising—50 percent of your time should be spent in revising. This is the area that is most overlooked. If you write using half your time revising, the professionalism of your communication will increase substantially.

Proofreading—Look for:

- Sentence structure.
- Page breaks.
- Improper spacing.
- Spelling and grammar.

Evaluating
Revise for clarity, conciseness, tone, and readability

- Eliminate wordy prepositional phrases (*in all probability*).
- Long lead-ins (*This is to inform you that*).
- Outdated expressions (*Pursuant to your request*).
- Needless adverbs (*definitely, very*).
- Fillers (*there are*).
- Repetitious words and redundancies (*combined together*).

Remember—Spell-checkers don’t find all the problems.

*I have a spell checkers.*
*That came with my PC.*
*I plainly marks four my review.*
*Mistakes I cannot sea.*
*I've run this poem threw it.*
*I'm sure your pleased to no.*
*Its letter perfect in it's weigh.*
*My checker tolled me sew.*

The Spell Checker only caught the *your* and *it’s* to be corrected.

Email and memos—Emails and memos are the preferred ways many people communicate today whether it is an intra-office communication, business to business communication, or even communications with customers. Unfortunately, many people send sloppily written emails and memos that make lasting, negative impressions because their authors mistakenly view them as less formal ways to communicate than formal reports or policy papers. Be advised, however, that typo-ridden emails show a lack of attention to detail that can make a customer or colleague feel you don’t care about the subject matter. Imagine, for example, sending a mistake-filled memo to franchisees about an important new system-wide program. Therefore, it is important to follow professional guidelines when drafting an email or memo.

Some helpful tips to make your e-mail more effective.

- Compose e-mail off-line first.
- Get the address right—double-check it.
- Avoid misleading subject lines—one or two words should do it.
- Be concise—readability index should be written to the level of your audience.
Do not send anything you wouldn’t want published.
Never respond when angry.
Resist humor and tongue-in-cheek comments.

Netiquette

Never send “spam.”
Limit sending blanket copies or forwarding to someone without permission.
Do cc the management, when appropriate, to add emphasis.
Consider cultural differences.
Use capital letters only for emphasis or for titles.
Don’t use small font size.
Double-check before you hit “send.”

Cross-cultural written communication

Adopt local writing styles.
Use a translator for items that are technical or lengthy.
Compose with short sentences and paragraphs.
Avoid ambiguous wording.
Cite numbers carefully—be certain to back them up or indicate sources.

Cushioning bad news

This is an essential skill if a person is to be an effective business to business communicator, especially in franchising where the success of a system depends upon everyone acting together. When sharing bad news, a communicator must be able to get as much support as possible for a common solution.

Therefore:

Use the passive voice in your writing.
Accentuate any positive (and there is always some positive).
Suggest a compromise or alternative and be flexible.
Formal Presentations Are A Staple of Business Communications

Formal presentations are a staple of communicating ideas in the business world. Becoming an effective presenter takes time and practice, but here are some helpful hints to help you effectively communicate a message in this format:

- Be well organized. Have a logical sequence to your thoughts.
- Get to the point up front. Make key points clear, direct, and succinct.
- Display confidence with voice and demeanor showing certainty and credibility.
- Be sincere, believable, and genuine.
- Have a theme for your message. The audience will leave with key points.
- Sound positive. Have an upbeat feel, deal with tough issues positively.
- Relate to your audience. Use language that the audience can clearly understand.
- Be enthusiastic. Sound alive and excited about your topic.
- Use visual aids that will help make a point.

Use an attention getter
- Quote someone else.
- Tell a joke.
- Share a story.
- Make a bold statement.
- Get the audience to participate.
- Ask a rhetorical question.
- State noteworthy facts.
- Give an interesting example.

Remember...
- Look at their faces. Divide the audience as a pie. Give everyone a piece.
- Gestures add energy and punctuate or emphasize a point.
- Stand tall and be steady and comfortable. When seated, sit up.
- Project loudly and clearly but vary the volume at times.
- Use a tone of respect. Speak with the feeling you want them to leave with.
- Show enthusiasm. Put some life in your voice.
- Go at a steady pace. Don’t speak too fast and too slowly.
- Use pauses. Allow your audience to stop and think.
- Eliminate non-words such as “uh, um, like, you know.”

Good speaking tips
A good communicator will use additional methods to maintain audience’s attention. These include:
Stories—Becoming a good storyteller is almost an art but can be learned. Short stories of relevant experiences either in your life or someone else’s are the most effective.

Anecdotes—Be certain your use of anecdotes and analogies are pertinent to your subject matter and are simple to understand.

Humor—Many speakers use humor to capture their audience when they begin a presentation. Being succinct and respectful will aid your presentation.

People listen differently—so adjust to their style
There are four styles defining how people listen and understand information communicated to them. These have been described as different colors.

Blue—Oriented toward compassion, integrity and authenticity. They value harmony, affection, and personal identity. Communicate with them showing care and concern. Asking “Doesn’t that feel right?” will work better than, “What do you think about that?”

Gold—Described as reliable, punctual, responsible, and consistent. They relate best with dependability, organization, and tradition. Use this approach, “Following this process will work every time.” Not “Just take it as it comes…there’s no schedule.”

Green—Characteristics are curious, logical, and intellectual. Show them how the parts fit together and how it functions and operates. Saying, “Spend some time understanding how this works and come back and tell me,” is better than “Even though you don’t understand how it works, just use it.”

Orange—Oriented to action, adventure and being competitive. Make it fun and exciting with a bit of risk. “You’re going to have to act fast on this one, it’s a real challenge.” is better than, “Just fill in the forms and send it in. You’ll hear back.”

When giving a presentation to a group, all of these personalities will be represented. The most effective way to communicate is to recognize and respond to all these different styles.

Judging the predominate color or listening style you’re talking to is not that hard. Look for the clues.

Blue—Pictures of children and family, appreciates art and music, wants to be a valuable member of a team.
Gold—Certificates of achievements, schedules and planning devices, leadership and organizational views.

Orange—Success posters, sports oriented, fun and enthusiastic.

Green—Skeptical thinker, puzzle and riddle solver, and detail oriented.

Enhance your communication by:

Blue—Being genuine and sincere, sensitive to body language, and focus on people, feelings and emotions.

Green—Talking about possibilities, stay unemotional, and avoid small talk.

Gold—Not wasting their time, staying on task, and being direct and professional.

Orange—Be bold and confident, keep the conversation moving, and focus on actions and results.

No matter which color best represents you, you can still adopt the characteristics of any other personality color. This will maximize your communication.

In a Presentation, Improve your Visual Aids

- **Show** one idea or concept per slide.
- **Use** a title or heading for each visual.
- **List** key words or phrases.
- **Consider** the rule of 6, no more than six words per line and six lines per visual.
- **Use** upper and lower case lettering—capitalize the first letter only.
- **Design** visuals to be seen by back row audience members.
- When in doubt, leave it out.

Responding to audience questions

Determine when you want to receive questions—Questions that are asked during the presentation will get the audience involved. Questions at the end will allow you to give your presentation uninterrupted.

In order to effectively answer audience questions:

- To understand the question clearly, use active listening.
- Be brief, direct and concise in your answer.
- Use your answers to reinforce key points—take the opportunity to reemphasize your message.
- Be both verbally and nonverbally positive in your response.
- Give positive reinforcement to answers—“You’ve raised a good issue.”
Conflict Resolution—Four Methods

In franchising, as in any business relationship, conflicts or disagreements will arise. How an organization addresses these issues will likely determine whether or not the parties involved can reach an amicable solution that benefits everyone, or whether they engage in costly litigation, ask for legislative action, which can undermine aspects of the franchise system, or go their separate ways entirely.

These tips can help leaders in an organization handle disputes in an effective manner:

The aggressive approach is least effective
You blame.
You interrupt and talk over.
You push to get your way.
You demand and order.

The passive-aggressive way
You tell others, not the source.
You withhold.
You make subtle and not so subtle critical remarks.
You withhold for a while, and then you unload.

The non-assertive way
You avoid conflict.
You appease the other person.
You become hesitant and apologetic.
You ramble and beat around the bush.

The assertive way. This is the most effective.
Go to the source.
Be direct and constructive in language and tone.
Solve problems together.
Stay firm and yet willing to compromise.
Brainstorming for solutions.
One idea per person in turn.

IFA has pioneered dispute resolution programs with its IFA Ombudsman Program and its endorsement of the National Franchise Mediation Program. Information about either of these can be found on the IFA website at www.franchise.org or by contacting the IFA at (202) 628-8000.
Someone has no new idea, they pass. 
Refrain from making judgments—no bad ideas. 
Continue until you run out of possible solutions.
Record the ideas. 
Evaluate the ideas and reach a consensus. 
Confirm the plan. 
Clarify the step to be taken. 
Close on a positive note. 
Thank everyone for their participation. 
Commit to typing up and providing a copy of the plan. 
Set a date to follow-up and review progress.

Summary and Conclusion
You are constantly communicating, whether you know it or not. Those who are open to communication that receive it will take that message and put their own spin on it. Remember, everything you do or don't do communicates a message. Knowing this can help you be certain the right message is being communicated.

Good communication is learned and not necessarily taught. It is something you strive to achieve. Give yourself time and room to grow into it. In your organization, be a leader in excellent communication.

This publication gives you the essence of the topic. How you will create and sustain better communication will be like combing your hair. No matter how well you did it yesterday, you have to do it again today.

Steve Nelson, Unishippers Inc.—
Chairman, Communications sub-committee of the International Franchise Association.

Bruce Bloom, CFE —
Chairman, Franchise Relations Committee of the International Franchise Association.
Cover 3
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Cover 4
(Black plastic)