Effective interpersonal communication is one of so many necessary facets of our lives, and we communicate in ways we may not even realize. When you see someone smiling and walking tall, it is easy to tell that that person is having a great day and you didn’t even have to ask! We also all know how difficult it can be to tell someone’s tone through an email: “Was that an angry ‘bye’, or a friendly ‘bye’?” Clearly, it is not always the words that make the difference in a message, so while choosing your words carefully is important, think about your tone and body language as well. It is just as important to listen as well. Communication is a two-way street! Open lines of communication allow organizations to work more efficiently within their group, with advisors, and with other student organizations.

This month’s issue focuses on communicating positively and productively to your peers and fellow leaders. It is our hope that you will be able to take some tips and strategies back to your groups and interpersonal relationships and enact the change that will take your group to great new places!

Quote of the Month:
“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”
–Winston Churchill
these kinds of relationships have been my currency in leadership situations... in business, in politics, in the non-profit sector, and now at the university.

Let me give an example. My friend Chad Jester (Nationwide Insurance) and I were asked two years ago to co-chair the $16.2 million capital campaign for the Mid-Ohio Foodbank, a significant community leadership assignment. Our only condition to accepting was that we be able to bring together the best team of people to form a campaign committee. These were all strong and dedicated people that we knew from more than ten years of community work together. Strong relationships. And a highly connected committee that would fan out over Central Ohio to make the asks, face-to-face. Today we are just one million dollars short of our goal.

Of course, we did leverage technology, too, for this fundraising campaign. Rich website. Online giving. Text-to-donate component. And it is how we have communicated with each other during the campaign.

I am not suggesting we set the technology revolution in communications aside. On the contrary, I am suggesting you make an equal investment in developing your interpersonal skills. It will make you a stronger leader.

I think the two go hand-in-hand in communications—a healthy balance between relationship skills and technology.

Think about that as you check your Blackberry one last time before you turn out the lights tonight.
Conflict

• **Address the Issue Head-On!**
  Nobody wants to deal with the festering emotions that are often tied to a drawn-out disagreement. If you have an issue with someone, no matter how small, it is best to have a conversation with that person within 24 hours of the incident. Otherwise, be prepared to let it go. For any of those lingering grudges you may be holding, leave them be and extend an olive branch!

• **Talk about the problem, not the person**
  When you do have to address someone, talk to the person specifically about the issue, and do not talk about it as a reflection of their character. Say someone used your toothpaste. You’ll likely have a much better experience if you choose to say, “I noticed that my toothpaste had been squeezed differently this morning, and Joe Roomie said he saw you using it. Is this true? How can we move on from this?” versus “I know you used my toothbrush. You’re such a jerk, why don’t you just steal everything I own?” When in doubt, rely on what you see and what you know versus letting your emotions get the best of you.

Active Listening*

• **Use responsive physical feedback**
  Have you ever found yourself in an interview, meeting, or just a conversation where the person you’re talking with is one blink away from napping? Or trying to stare into your soul and know what you’re going to say before you say it? It sure can be difficult to concentrate. When someone else is speaking to you, maintain good eye contact, use appropriate facial expressions, and be aware of your posture. It can be intimidating to talk to someone who is showing no human emotion, so don’t let that be you!

• **Tell ‘em what they said!**
  Nothing says “I’m really listening to you” like repeating back what you just heard. In a meeting setting, it’s important to be on the same page, so clarifying statements are a must. If you’re unsure of something, try saying “I hear what you’re saying, but I need a little clarification. What I’m hearing is that (repeat message)…is that correct?” Don’t leave the meeting with any loose ends, and if there are tasks to be assigned, assign them out loud and write them down!

*from the Self-Help Network Center, Wichita State University

Electronic Communication

• **When you can, skip the e-mail!**
  If the person you are emailing is in the same hallway or building, go ahead and take a stroll down to their room or office and ask what’s going on. There are too many potential variables that could cause the email to lose its way. Spam filters, wrong addresses, and failed deliveries could all be your greatest enemies when it comes to email correspondence. If the message makes it through, try to follow-up with the recipient if you were sharing a document or an important message.

• **Always be professional**
  It can be assumed that faculty, staff, and any professional, really, spent a lot of time earning their degree and their title. Recognize that with your email greeting! Open your emails with their professional title, Mr. / Ms. /Mrs., or “Hello”, and always steer clear of “Hey -first name-”. It can be interpreted as disrespectful and doesn’t set a great tone for your email, regardless of the content.

Everyday Good Practices

• **A firm handshake and eye contact go a long way.** Maintaining eye contact can be intimidating at first, but it is easy to get used to!

• **Keep your posture in mind when sitting or standing and talking with others.**

• **Speak up!** Mumbling makes it difficult to hear, and is frustrating for anyone around you.

• **Smile!** Everyone appreciates a cheery face, and it makes you much more approachable.
The New Ohio Union

A Sneak Peek

Chandelier in the Ballroom

Stairs in the Great Hall

... Coming in Spring!

For more information or submissions, please contact Andy DeLong: delong.112@osu.edu