



# UNIT 5

## Communication Strategies for Brand Building

### Learning Outcomes

**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Develop skill in areas like focus, concentration, and communication to support your brand
- ✓ Build credibility and trust by living your brand



## Unit 5

### Communication Strategies for Brand Building

#### What is Said and What is Heard

Some people seem to be naturally good communicators, while others have to work at it. Communication skills are not related to how bright we are, either; people can be gifted in their subject matter, but struggle with communicating what they know or to connect with people.

What we say isn't always what the other person hears. Our message goes through a complicated system of filters and outside influences before it reaches the recipient. We must always clarify that the person has received the message that we intended to send.



#### Communication Situations

What would you do if you were trying to talk to someone...

**In a noisy workplace?**

---

---

---

---

---

**And there were a lot of visual distractions?**

---

---

---

---

---



**And you felt really tired?**

---

---

---

---

---

**And they had a very strong accent?**

---

---

---

---

---

**And they were speaking too fast for you to understand, or too slowly or softly?**

---

---

---

---

---

**And they kept using jargon or terms you didn't understand?**

---

---

---

---

---

**And they appeared to be very stressed?**

---

---

---

---

---



**And they were using emotionally charged words or statements?**

---



---



---



---

**And they were verbally attacking you?**

---



---



---



---

## How Do You Rate Your Listening Ability?

One reason listening is so important is that we do so much of it every day. We often say that good communicators spend far more of their time listening than they do talking. Fortunately, listening is a skill that we can develop. In an age when we are inundated with media messages and portable devices, we can choose to listen more than many people seem to be.

### Listening Assessment

**Answer the questions on the test below. Don't answer the questions too quickly; it is easy to confuse what you know is right from what you actually do.**

Question	Yes	No	Points
1. Do you enjoy listening?			
2. Is it easy for you to listen with interest to a large variety of subjects?			
3. Do your friends seek you out to discuss a problem or decision when they need help?			
4. Does your attention usually stray toward other groups or people entering or leaving the room?			
5. Do you interrupt?			



6. Are you more apt to be thinking ahead to what you will say next rather than weighing what you are being told?			
7. Do you stop listening to everything when you strongly disagree with the speaker on one point?			
8. Do you assume or anticipate regarding the other person's views?			
9. Do you feel you can judge most people quite quickly before hearing them out?			
10. Do you generalize (All old people think... all redheads... all college kids...)?			
11. Do you encourage others to elaborate or clarify points you have misunderstood?			
12. Do you listen to what is not said, such as the obvious omission?			
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			

### Scoring

- Give yourself 2 points if you answered “Yes” for question 1. You enjoy listening as much as you enjoy talking.
- Give yourself 2 points if you answered “No” to questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.
- Give yourself 2 points if you answered “Yes” to questions 2, 3, 11, and 12.

**Your score:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Interpretation

If your score is **20 or more**, you've already developed some strong communication skills. You have the ability to listen to people, understand what they are saying, and communicate your understanding back to them. Use your listening and communication skills to help others.

If your score is between **10 and 18**, you're within the average range. Use this quiz to help you identify where you're doing well and where you would like to do better.

If your score is **less than 10**, it's time to start learning! Use this quiz to help you set some goals. Start with one or two things that you would like to improve on, such as empathizing, paraphrasing, or asking good questions. Then, we'll work on setting an action plan, and you'll be on the road to being a better listener, and a better communicator.



## Active Listening Skills

The problem is that listening and hearing are not the same thing. Most of us were fortunate to be born with hearing, but listening is a skill that must be learned and practiced in order to use it successfully. When you **hear** something, sound enters your eardrum, passes through your ear canal, and registers in your brain. **Listening** is what you do with that sound and how you interpret it.

Here are some tips for successful listening:

- Listen intentionally for people's names.
- Listen with interest.
- Try to get rid of your assumptions.
- Listen for what isn't said.

**Listening** is hard work. When other people are listening to us, they have the same difficulties we do in trying to focus on a message. Our minds wander, noises or thoughts distract us, and we can be thinking about what to do next.

**Active listening** means that we try to understand things from the speaker's point of view. It includes letting the speaker know that we are listening and that we have understood what was said. This is not the same as **hearing**, which is a physical process, where sound enters the eardrum and messages are passed to the brain. Active listening can be described as an attitude that leads to listening for shared understanding.

When we make a decision to listen for total meaning, we listen for the content of what is being said as well as the attitude behind what is being said. Is the speaker happy, angry, excited, sad...or something else entirely?

## Responding to Feelings

The content (the words spoken) is one thing, but the way that people feel really gives full value to the message. Responding to the speaker's feelings adds an extra dimension of listening. Are they disgusted and angry or in love and excited? Perhaps they are ambivalent! These are all feelings that you can reply to in your part of the conversation.

## Reading Cues

Really listening means that we are also very conscious of the non-verbal aspects of the conversation.

- What are the speaker's facial expressions, hand gestures, and posture telling us?
- Is their voice loud or shaky?
- Are they stressing certain points?
- Are they mumbling or having difficulty finding the words they want to say?



## Demonstration Cues

When you are listening to someone, these techniques will show a speaker that you are paying attention, providing you are genuine in using them.

**Physical indicators** include making eye contact, nodding your head from time to time, and leaning into the conversation.

You can also give **verbal cues** or use phrases such as “Uh-huh,” “Go on,” “Really!” and, “Then what?”

You can use **questions** for clarification or **summarizing statements**. Examples:

- “Do you mean they were charging \$7.00 for just a cup of coffee?”
- “So after you got a cab, got to the store, and found the right sales clerk, what happened then?”

## Tips for Becoming a Better Listener

- **Make a decision to listen.** Close your mind to clutter and noise and look at the person speaking with you. Give them your undivided attention.
- **Don’t interrupt** people. Make it a habit to let them finish what they are saying. Respect that they have thoughts they are processing and speaking about, and wait to ask questions or make comments until they have finished.
- Keep your **eyes** focused on the speaker and your **ears** tuned to their voice. Don’t let your eyes wander around the room, just in case your attention does too.
- Carry a **notebook** or start a conversation file on your computer. Write down all the discussions that you have in a day. Capture the subject, who spoke more (were you listening or doing a lot of the talking?), what you learned in the discussion, as well as the who, what, when, where, why, and how aspects of it. Once you have conducted this exercise 8-10 times, you will be able to see what level your listening skills are currently at.
- Ask a few **questions** throughout the conversation. When you ask, people will know that you are listening to them, and that you are interested in what they have to say. Your ability to summarize and paraphrase will also demonstrate that you heard them.
- When you demonstrate good listening skills, they tend to be **infectious**. If you want people to communicate well at work, you have to set a high example.

## Building Your Credibility

We’ve probably all worked with people (including leaders) that we did not respect. No matter how long we worked with them, and no matter how great our results were, there was something about them which stopped us from trusting them. This lack of respect leads to dysfunctional teams, where people are afraid of repercussions. When people work well with one another, and respect one another, trust is built.

Factors that impact your credibility include small things (like remembering to think of people and send a thank you



note) and big things (like being punctual). Credibility is affected by your ability to engender trust. It is reinforced when people speak about you in a manner that reflects the regard they hold you in.

Below are five ways that you can develop trusting relationships.

If you say you'll do it, then get on and do it.

Some people are good at planning and setting things up, but not so good when it comes to the follow through. At some point, you have to stop talking and start doing. If details are not really your strong suit, then make sure that you have people you can delegate to so that the things you say you will do get done. If you break promises, any trust that people have in you will be swiftly eroded.

If you mess it up, own it.

We all make mistakes, and it's a way to learn how to improve. Instead of pointing the finger at someone else (especially members of your team), make sure the blame falls where it belongs – on you. Leaders and people who want to have impact learn that accepting responsibility for the good and the bad builds trust and credibility.

Be there for people.

If people feel micro-managed, they feel that you do not trust them to do their own work. Allow them to experiment, take risks, and to learn from failure as well as their own choices. Remember to also see what their strengths are and to celebrate when they do things well. Don't try to take credit when the whole team is contributing to success. As well, make sure that you are available when they need your support through mentoring and coaching.

Be assertive.

Although this is something that varies culturally and even within industries, you've got to be prepared to stand up for the things you believe in. You must also develop tools to manage conflict and to solve problems. If everyone that you work with seems accepting of everything you do and say, chances are that they are afraid of telling you the truth about how they really feel. Encourage sharing of opinions, debate, and discussion as a way for everyone to learn and grow.

Be yourself.

Demonstrating your brand and having a personal impact on the things that you do does not mean that you become someone else in public. Be accepting of who you are (including your strengths and weaknesses) and commit to ongoing development so that you can be the best person you can be.



## Brand You

### Defining Your Brand

When we refer to your brand, we're thinking about the package that you want to offer to others. This is a small scale version of a corporate brand, and vastly different from a cattle brand. Thinking about your personal brand can seem a bit vague, so let's make it something that is more tangible.

When a company considers their brand, they do so in terms of **standards**. Their logo will be created, and with that will be rules (standards) about how the logo is placed on a page, whether it can be reproduced in black and white or must always be in color, what uniforms staff need to wear, how the business itself will be presented, and so on.

Your brand is not the same as a corporate brand, but it has some similar elements. **Your brand** is a reflection of the story that you want to tell about yourself and how you wish for others to see you. Over time, as you evolve as a human being (and as you age), your story changes. You finish some things, you start others, and things that are important at one stage of your life may lose importance over time. Your goals will also change over time.

If you think of what you want said of you in the public, those things would be a good representation of your brand, wouldn't they? The best exercise for this is to think about what will be said about you when you can no longer speak for yourself, when you have passed away and someone is writing a eulogy in tribute to you or writing an obituary.

### Designing My Brand

Details

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Age** \_\_\_\_\_

Direction

**To become the person I want to be I will:**

---

---



**I conduct my life centered on the values of:**

---

---

**I respect characteristics that I see in others, such as:**

---

---

**Presentation**

**Mode of dress when out in public (casual, business casual, snappy dresser, etc.), including specific or signature items that you wear:**

---

---

**My favorite color(s) to wear, decorate my home, my vehicle(s):**

---

---

**My hair usually gets styled like this:**

---

---

**My makeup, eyewear, and accessories (if worn) look like this:**

---

---

**The gadgets I have and use regularly are... (Are you someone who likes brand new, or do you wait until the bugs are worked out of things and purchase them later?)**

---

---

**These are my current hobbies, including ones I want to cultivate:**

---

---



**Things still on my bucket list (the things I want to do before I can't do them):**

---

---

**Accomplishments**

**These are my greatest accomplishments. (Indicate whether they are already finished, yet to be started, or in progress.)**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**The Top Five**

**My last two bosses would use these five words to describe me:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

**My best friend would use these five words to describe me:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

**My partner, children, or siblings would use these five words to describe me:**

---

---

---

---

---



---

**Are the five words consistent in all the descriptions here? If so, congratulations! It seems like you are consistent in the way that you present yourself. If not, what can you do about it?**

---

---

---

---

---

**What are you doing to make those elements part of your life every week?**

---

---

---

---

---

Ready, Set, Draw!

**Create a logo or self-portrait that represents your personal brand. (You are not being marked on artistic merit; just capture the essentials!)**







---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Social media is an evolving and influential medium for sharing information. If you say something that someone notices, and they click on a “share” button, your message can be spread throughout an increasing number of sites that include blogs, wikis, forums, podcasts, photo sites, and bookmarks. Social media has been created specifically to share information among networks, and its popularity continues to grow. Leveraging social media is an incredible way for a single message to be spread, but the downside is that a message that you later want to recant can be very hard to get rid of.

This means that if you make comments about somebody that you dislike, a company that you want to complain about, a book that struck a nerve, or an opinion about something going on in politics, you’ve got to keep in mind that those comments can be tracked back to you. You must be mindful about what you place online.

When it comes to getting a promotion, applying for a new job, or trying to secure a contract, Human Resources departments and your contacts regularly search the Internet to see what is there. In order to maintain the integrity of your brand, you need to do the same. Search for your name (and all variations of it, including images) in several different search engines and see what appears. Do these messages support your brand? Do they tarnish your image in any way? Make sure that anything that does not represent who you are is properly removed.

In order to manage your presence on social media, we recommend that you reserve your name on any social networking site that you come across so that other people cannot pretend to be you. Then, create a consistent message (your brand) across all sites that you use. Don’t think that you have to be active on every site, because you don’t. Spend as little time as you can on just a couple of sites, and save the rest of your time for achieving your goals.

**What are you ready and willing to do?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

## Having Influence

### Persuasion Techniques

If you want to be someone who is known for being a clear communicator, watch out for words like these:

- I'll try
- Ought to
- Should have
- Must
- Always
- Never

If you are tempted to insert these words into your conversations, replace them with clearer terms. Instead of "I'll try to get back to you later," say "I'll call you back by 4:00 today" (and then make sure that you do!).

There are different levels of influence that you can exert and different approaches that you can take. Depending on the situation, you may wish to persuade or you may have to move onto negotiation techniques.

### Persuasion

**Expecting the best** and **knowing when to stop** talking are probably two of the most important elements of persuading others. If we can't convince ourselves of something, it will be very difficult for us to persuade others.

Have you ever known another person who talked so much that other people stopped listening? These individuals overwhelm their listeners with conversation until the listener becomes confused, bored, or both.

Mark Twain used to tell the following story that bears out that point:

"I was attending a meeting where a missionary had been invited to speak. I was deeply impressed. The preacher's voice was beautiful. He told us about the sufferings of the natives and he pleaded for help with such moving simplicity that I mentally doubled the 50 cents I was about to put in the plate.

"He described the pitiful misery of these poor people and I raised the amount again. As he continued, I felt that all the cash I carried on me would be insufficient, so I decided to write a large check.

"Then he went on. That preacher went on and on about the dreadful state of these poor natives and I abandoned the idea of a check. And still he went on. And I got back to a dollar, and then 50 cents. And still he went on. And when the plate finally came round...I took 10 cents out of it!"



## The lesson: balance enthusiasm with control.

### Ten Ways to Persuade

1. Demonstrate your expertise and knowledge without becoming patronizing.
2. Make sure integrity is reflected in your standards, values, and behavior.
3. Know when to be silent.
4. Create an obligation for one or both parties.
5. Proceed a bit at a time, from inconsequential points into major areas.
6. Never corner people. Leave them a way out.
7. Give sincere compliments.
8. Be childlike: open and transparent. Expand your center of interests to include others and explore the talents of others.
9. Remember names.
10. Remember: difficult people don't play by the same rules.

(Adapted from the *Secrets of Power Persuasion* by Roger Dawson)

## Negotiation Techniques

The essence of negotiating is that in order to get what we want, sometimes we have to give something up. We can negotiate on price (you give me more value and I will give you more money) or principles.

### Argue Based on Principle instead of Positions

You've probably heard that expression that someone is "digging their heels in," meaning that they are so focused on what they want (and their position) that they have lost sight of the topic being argued and the principle.

If you are negotiating, try not to defend a position; otherwise you simply become more attached to it and will defend it even harder. You'll try to save face and lose your commitment to the real problem.

### Arguing Chips Away at Relationships

Since a negotiation is a form of conversation, the idea is to have successful negotiations that contribute to more conversations. Be careful that your approach to negotiating does lead to a battle of wills. Each of you can clearly state what you are willing to do or not do, and then work through the problem rather than deteriorating to personal attacks and bravado.

### The Softer Side

Sometimes people who resist conflict or who understand the high price that can be exacted for hard bargaining try to soften the edge by being friendlier in their approach. They get focused on the relationship and on reaching an agreement rather than simply pushing their own agenda. This is an example of soft negotiation where we extend trust to the other side, make offers and concessions, and do what we can to avoid confrontation.



## Principled Negotiation Works

Instead of having to choose whether to stick to your position, or to use a soft or hard positional approach, we recommend that you apply **principled negotiation**. This approach is neither soft nor hard, and works in almost any negotiation by applying four simple strategies, as described in *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury.

Each point deals with a basic element of negotiation and suggests what you should do about it.

- **People:** Focus on the problem, not the people.
- **Interests:** Be concerned with interests of both parties, not digging in your heels.
- **Options:** Think of different solutions and possibilities instead of starting out from where you want to end up.
- **Standard:** Make sure that results are based on an actual standard, instead of something subjective.

## Focus on the Problem, Not the People

We often make the comment that we have to focus on behaviors, not people. Take this concept seriously. Don't get angry: get clear about behaviors that need to change.

## Negotiators are People First

When it comes to negotiations, we are dealing with human beings. And when people get passionate about something, it is a good reminder for us to see that they have emotions, convictions, different paradigms, and they can be unpredictable.

When things get heated, which they will at times, remember that your emotions and hot buttons are also involved. Ask yourself if you are paying attention to the people, or are getting distracted by positions.

## Expressing Your No

Once you understand what someone is asking of you and decide you want to say no, choose the kind of no that best suits the person and situation. Here are some general rules to follow.

Say no **firmly and calmly**, without saying, "I'm sorry," which weakens your position.

Say no, followed by a **straightforward explanation** of what you are feeling or what you are willing to do.

- "I'm uncomfortable doing that."
- "I'm not willing to do that."
- "I don't want to do that."
- "I don't like to do that."

Say no, and then give a **choice or alternative**.

- "I can't help you now, but I will when I get this done, which could be in an hour."
- "I don't have time today, but I could help out the first thing tomorrow morning."



Say no and then **clarify your reasons**. This does not include long-winded statements filled with excuses, justifications, and rationalizations. It's enough that you do not want to say yes. Your clarification is given to provide the receiver more information so that he or she can better understand your position.

Use your **natural no**. You may have developed your own style of saying no based on your past experience and personality. If so, use it.

Make an **empathetic listening statement** and then say no. You may paraphrase the content and feeling of the request, and then state your no.

Example: "I can see that it is important to you that one of my assistants gets your report done. I'd like to have someone do it, but my staff is already overburdened with high priority tasks to be completed by the end of the day."

Say yes, and then give your **reasons for not doing it or your alternative solution**. This approach is very interesting. You may want to use it in situations when you are willing to meet the request, but not at the time or in the way the other person wants it.

- "Yes, I would be willing to help you out, but I won't have time until this afternoon."
- "Yes, I'd be willing to go along with your second alternative, but not the third one you suggested."

## The Persistent Response

You can also use the persistent response. This method of saying no entails using a one-sentence refusal statement and persistently repeating it as often as necessary, no matter what the person says. This technique is useful when dealing with very aggressive or manipulative people who won't take no for an answer. The persistent response can be effective in maintaining your refusal while continuing to be in charge of your emotions.

Because this way of saying no is unusual and a bit complex, we will provide some detailed guidelines for applying it.

First, select a concise, one-sentence statement and repeat it no matter what the other person says or does.

Examples:

- "I understand how you feel, but I'm not willing..."
- "I'm not interested..."
- "I don't want to..."
- "I'm uncomfortable doing that, so I don't want to..."
- "You might be right, but I'm not interested."

After each statement by the other person, say your persistent response sentence. It's important that you don't get sidetracked by responding to any other issue the other person brings up.

## Guidelines for Saying No

Say your statement **firmly, calmly, and as unemotionally** as possible.

Be aware of your **nonverbal behavior**, making sure you don't come across passively or aggressively. Use plenty of



**silence** to your advantage. Your silence will project the message that the other's statements and manipulation are futile.

Be **persistent**. Simply state your response one more time than the other person makes his or her request, question, or statement. If the other person makes six statements, you make seven. If the other person makes three statements, you make four. Most often, the other person will feel ill at ease and stop after three or four statements. Other times, your response will move the other person to offer options you are willing to go along with.

### Further Reading:

- ✓ Workman Publishing Company, 2000.
- ✓ Canfield, Jack, and Janet Switzer. *The Success Principles*. William Morrow Paperbacks, 2006.
- ✓ Cialdini, Robert. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. Collins, 2006.
- ✓ Fisher, Roger, Bruce Patton, and William Ury. *Getting to Yes*. Penguin, 2011.