

Communication— IT's Key to Success

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How we communicate dramatically affects our success in every aspect of life! We often forget how important that is, and forgetting limits us.

This is especially true in Information Technology (IT). The question becomes, then, *How successful do you want to be?* And along with that, *Do you want to maximize how The Lord can use you?*

Biblical Perspective

Paul says in Ephesians 5:15, "Be very careful, then, how you live- not as unwise but as wise."^[1] The phrase *to be very careful* is translated in some versions as "walking circumspectly". The word circumspect means to have full awareness of your entire surroundings, like an animal cautiously walking through an open field. That is a good way to communicate, but it's not easy. It leaves no room for laziness; in fact, it requires a high level of focus! But the wise pay attention!

Getting Practical

Every profession has its acronyms, and in IT we have a lot of them. When IT professionals talk to each other we use those acronyms; when we're talking with non-professionals, however, using them limits our ability to be understood. **It is always the responsibility of the one communicating to do so in a way that their message can be understood by their audience.** Is it easy to switch our communication style to match our audience? No! But the wise do so because it is essential.

When I'm talking with a fellow engineer, it's okay to say something like, "You could speed up that system by swapping the HD with SSD and bumping the RAM." Simple. But if I'm talking to someone who is not technical, it would be better to say, "You could speed up that computer by replacing the old hard drive with a newer technology, like a solid state storage device and increasing the memory available for processing the amount of data you're working with."

Those who can quickly adjust their communication style to match the needs of those they're communicating with have the greatest chance for success. Who can do that? Anyone who chooses to put out the effort to walk circumspectly. It requires more brain processing power, but that additional power consumption is worth it!

Some who know my story know that before becoming a Christian I was a major drug user. That's not something I'm proud of, but it is part of my story. One of the drugs I used a lot was LSD. So much so, in fact, that I was losing my ability to communicate! How could I tell? By being observant and interpreting the facial expressions of people I was talking to. Their facial expressions told me they were struggling to understand what I was trying to say. So I started listening to myself while I was talking, and realized that the subject of my sentences was changing so often that I didn't make sense! No wonder they were struggling to understand me! I concluded that I had work to do if I

wanted to be successful.

Humility & Dedication

A good communicator interprets the facial expressions and body language of those they're talking to and makes real-time adjustments to improve the success of their message. Some are too lazy or don't care enough to communicate well. Realizing you're not communicating successfully and making adjustments takes focus, effort, and humility. Good communicators do not insist that their audience rise to meet their communication level, but instead humbly adjust their style as needed.

Knowing Your Audience

When I talk, speak, or write, I try to identify my audience to increase my success. My professional topics are usually related to technology, so I often ask questions after using a term that might be unfamiliar like, "Is that a term you're comfortable with?" Their response to that non-judgmental question helps me modify my content to increase my communication success.

Often there are multiple audiences we're communicating to all at once. Writing a response to a support ticket is like that! I usually try to meet the communication needs of the user who opened the ticket, their supervisor, my supervisor, and sometimes (depending on the issue) our legal system. All at one time! Can I do that effortlessly or quickly? No, especially since it's in writing. I have to re-read the content with each audience in mind and make terminology adjustments *before* it's ready for the SEND button.

The Bottom Line

Don't limit how The Lord can use you or your professional success by not communicating circumspectly. Slow down and make the effort to communicate well to your audiences, whether in a one-on-one conversation, in a group setting, or in writing. Watch for visual cues when possible and make adjustments! Those you're communicating with will be blessed, and so will you.

^[1] *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. (1984). (Eph 5:15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.