Communication Hacks

STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING COLLABORATION AND DEALING WITH CONFLICT IN OPEN SOURCE

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Today we'll cover

Navigating cultural differences
Improving feedback
Active listening
Favorite hacks

Slides can be found: bit.ly/communication-hacks-ns
Navigating cultural differences

Open source communities attract members from all over the world
We need to understand cultural differences

Countries are ranked along these 7 indicators:

1. Communicating
2. Evaluating
3. Leading
4. Trusting
5. Disagreeing
6. Scheduling
7. Persuading

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Myers via https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/
What it means

Communicating

Low context: good communication is precise, simple, and clear. Repetition is often used to avoid misunderstandings.

High context: good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered. You must read between the lines.

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Myers via https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/
Direct negative feedback: delivered frankly, bluntly, and honestly. Negative messages are not softened by positive ones. Absolutes are used. Ok to give in front of groups.

Indirect negative feedback: delivered softly, subtly, and diplomatically. Positive messages wrap negative ones. Qualifying descriptors are used. Feedback must be given in private.

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Myers via https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/
What it means

**Persuading**

**Principles first:** Value the "why" first. Have been trained to develop the theory or concept first before presenting the fact, statement, or opinion.

**Applications first:** Value the "how" or "what" first. Trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and back it up or explain the conclusion as necessary.

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Myers via [https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/](https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/)
In 2020 there are Directors with backgrounds from:

UK
United States
Brazil
Mexico
Nigeria

Source: The Culture Map by Erin Myers via https://www.erinmeyer.com/culturemap/
Feedback is a gift, but most of us find it challenging
Giving and receiving feedback is a skill that we can build!

Be aware of underlying biases or tendencies
As we just learned, real cultural differences exist that we need to be aware of. When we give or receive feedback, we are influenced by our own stereotypes and biases.

Feedback is a good thing!
Feedback-seeking behavior has been linked to higher job satisfaction, being more creative on the job, and adapting to things more quickly.

Seeking negative feedback is associated with higher performance.
Take some time
We often get defensive or angry when we first hear negative feedback. It is ok to take some time to process the feedback!

Create a script
Make taking a time out a part of your process and develop a script to help: "Thanks for the feedback. I’m going to take some time to process it and will come back to you later."

Focus on your physical body
If you have a physical reaction, focus on your physical body to ground yourself. Try a breathing technique: 4-4-4. Breathe in for four seconds, hold for four, release for four. Try that at least four times.

Process the feedback
Ask yourself: What is true about what you heard? What do you think is biased? How can you use this to progress?

TIPS FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Receiving negative feedback is tough!
We feel bad emotions more strongly than we feel good ones because our brains are wired to detect threats to help us survive. Our fight, flight, or freeze instincts can kick in when we receive negative feedback.
Identify your triggers

Truth Triggers
Set off by the substance of the feedback itself. We feel that it's somehow off, unhelpful, or simply untrue.

Relationship Triggers
Set off by a particular person who is giving us this gift of feedback. Our focus shifts from the feedback itself to our relationship with the person giving us the feedback.

Identity Triggers
Causes us to question our sense of identity. We feel overwhelmed, threatened, ashamed, or off balance. We're suddenly unsure what to think of ourselves and we end up just trying to survive.

Source: Thanks for the Feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well
Think about what kind of feedback you’re giving:
- **Evaluation**: helps you understand where you are and expectations
- **Coaching**: helps you improve
- **Positive / Appreciation**: motivates and encourages

When I think ... it makes me feel...

Right person, place, and time.

Positive feedback public, negative feedback private
Active listening

Communication isn't just about talking -- listening is just as important
“Being heard and understood is one of the greatest desires of the human heart.”

- Richard Carlson
Types of Listening

Distracted Listening - multitasking or preoccupied.

Content Listening - listening to the facts and planning how to respond.

Identifying Listening - responding with a similar situation to show you understand.

Problem Solving - listening with the intent to provide feedback and ideas on how to solve the situation.

Active Listening - you hear the facts and the feelings and respond appropriately to both.
ACTIVE LISTENING

Simple Signals and Questions
Cues help us understand what to do. For example, traffic signals let us know if we should stop, go, or yield to traffic.

Our actions and words do the same. Looking at people in the eye, putting down our phone, or looking away from our computer may signal that we're interested and listening.

Verbal cues that show we're listening may include:

- Really?
- Uh huh
- Interesting
- Wow!
- Tell me more about that
- What's going on?
- What do you think?
- How are things?
ACTIVE LISTENING

Paraphrasing
Identify key words and the meaning of what is being said. Then, rephrase what you have heard in your own words and to repeat the message back to the speaker.

Why this is powerful:
• Helps the speaker feel heard and understood
• Don't have to be in agreement
• Makes room for many ideas
• Summarizes and can lead to closure
• Gives you more information and buys you time to think
Active listening is important for building relationships

You can employ these principles in the virtual world, but more importantly, you can use them in person at events to build relationships that carry on into the online world!
Favorite Hacks

Practical advice you can try out immediately
It's the writer's job to be understood!

Formatting helps!

- **Avoid long sentences.** Whenever you see yet another "and," break it up into two sentences.
- **Don't assume previous knowledge.** Try to make it easy for someone new to jump into the conversation.
- **Skim test.** See if you can skim through and get the main points.
- **Call to action.** Make your call to action clear and state who needs to do it, and by when.

Yes, and...

Instead of saying, "No" or "Yes, but," use "Yes, and."

This acknowledges what people say and still gives you room to disagree with them. People are more likely to listen to you if they feel like you listened to them.
Collaborative Phrases

How might we...

Might I suggest we...

What are your thoughts?

From my perspective, it's a little bit different. Let me explain...

I hear what you're saying, and I have a different perspective...

Let me see if I understand what you're saying...

I like your idea, have you thought about...
“Communication works for those who work at it.”

- John Powell
REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

-The Culture Map by Erin Myers

Cross Culture Collaboration Guide by GitLab -- a guide to acknowledging cultural differences in the workplace and setting expectations for interactions

Thanks for the Feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen (book and article)

Feedback (and other dirty words): Why we fear it, how to fix it by Tamra Chandler and Laura Dowling

SBI Model -- Center for Creative Leadership

10 Phrases that Inspire Collaboration -- Randstad Risesmart

Communication Essentials Workshop -- novaworks.org
Thank You!

Slides can be found: bit.ly/communication-hacks-ns
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QUESTIONS?

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