

How to create great communications

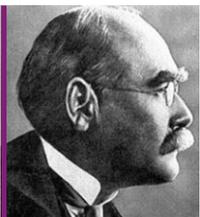
Ask any group of people what needs to be improved in the workplace and the chances are that most will say communication.

People will always feel that they need to know more than they do about what is happening in the organisation. Sometimes its because they haven't been told, and sometimes its because they haven't been told very well. As it's something that we all do all day long, instinctively and subconsciously, we should be better at it than we are. Most people will cite 'communication' as one of their key skills on their CV and, like driving, we all think we are good at it.

So why so many problems?

In many respects the answer lies in the fact that although we do it all the time, we rarely have the time to think through the how and the why each time we communicate.

At Bourton, although we sometimes have very complex tools for our process improvement work, we have a very quick and simple communications tool, based on the well documented words of Rudyard Kipling:



"I keep six honest serving men: (They taught me all I knew) Their names are What and Where and When, And How and Why and Who."

-Rudyard Kipling

Listen and tune in

The secret is, instead of getting straight into transmission mode, you should listen first: tune in to the situation and ask six simple questions.

Why – what is the outcome I am seeking here? What do I want people to do or say or feel or think as a result of communicating with them?

If you don't know the answer to this question, go no further 'til you do! This is your purpose.

Who – which people are best placed to help you to achieve your outcome? How might their needs vary? This is the audience.

What – what do these people need to know in order to do or say or feel or think what you want them to? This is the content.

Where – where in their world does what you want them to do or say or feel or think fit? What is in it for them? This is your argument.

When – at what point in the day, week, month, process will the message have its greatest impact? This is the timing.

How – what is people's preferred way to receive the messages you want to get over and how might your style need to be changed to ensure you are on the right wavelength? This is your medium. Take care on this as the answer to this question can only really be addressed when you know the answer to the first six!

Use the answers to design and plan the message and the method. Use your eyes and ears to gather reactions, and go round the cycle again.

Bourton Group has supported many businesses from a wide range of industries to implement Lean improvement techniques via tailored engagement programs.

We work collaboratively to deliver on efficiency objectives and targets, with returns on investment of over 20:1 being reported, along with wider benefits of reducing waste, decreasing time to complete activities and improvements to quality – all of which have been directly attributed to Lean.