

High Impact Communications Q&A

Views from a Communications Business Skills Expert

Following the webinar "[High Impact Communications - Discovering the Value of Persuasive Communications](#)" some of you asked some great questions. Our communications and business skills expert - Angela Pinnington - has agreed to answer a few of the questions raised by you during and after the webinar.

About your Communications Business Skills expert

Angela is a senior learning and development professional with extensive international experience. she has knowledge of a wide variety of sectors and functions, from both an internal and a consulting perspective. Angela has worked in both the private and public sectors - with a range of clients including multinational PLCs - and is known for getting results.

This webinar is a snapshot of the [High Impact Communications](#) course, which is a great place for you to start understanding your communication style and the impact it has on others.

Through our [High Impact Communications](#) course you will learn:

- What miscommunication is and how to avoid it
- How to identify your communication style
- What the "Communication Planning Process" is
- Content = Audience + Purpose
- What medium you should use to achieve maximum impact
- How to structure TREOA (topic - recommendation - evidence - outcome - action)
- How to have high impact meetings, delivery and dialogue
- The secret to making a real impact!

[View Course Description](#)

The next 'High Impact Communications' courses are happening on July 5-7th and October 26 - 28th

Hi all,

Thanks for your interest in the webinar, I hope you got what you needed out of it and I hope that I cover your questions adequately here...



Angela Pinnington
Business Skills Expert

The material in this course is pitched at a level that is suitable for most people in business. However, if you feel a group of you within your organisation are particularly advanced, we can deliver tailored in house corporate training. Because we are primarily a Project Management and Business Analysis training company, we always look at how our business skills courses can be applied in practice in a project management environment, however, this course is suitable for people from other industries. The approach looked at within this course is also suitable for other PM approaches. For example, although Agile PM demands a slightly different approach to communication, the model TREOA (Topic, Recommendation, Evidence, Outcome, Action), and the other approaches covered on this course, are still applicable.

Some questions...

Q: It is clear that our project teams often lack communication skills. I find this so frustrating - why is this issue so often ignored, when it is clear that good communication is the backbone of project success?

ANGELA: As you say, very often project teams do lack the skills that are so vital to succeed in our industry. There are so many components, expectations, deliverables and ultimately - organisational success, carried through in our projects, it is surprising that some organisations still haven't done anything about this and there can be many reasons for this. We can look at the origins of many project managers - they started off as technical experts, and as they progressed, they didn't necessarily build up the corresponding professional business and communication skills. Compounded by the recent shortage of resources, technical issues and immediate deliverables are often seen as more urgent and 'active listening' can be impaired when project managers are stressed or under pressure.

To get around this: try and understand what it is they want to achieve from the project and why they want to achieve it. Using this knowledge, show them the possible courses of action and their outcomes (using evidence), and make clear the involvement required from them to achieve success. Get them to pick the course of action that suits them best - you will secure a greater level of cooperation from them this way as they will feel greater responsibility and involvement. But the key here is really understanding where they are coming from - no easy task!

Q: Sometimes it is clear that a misunderstanding is taking place, but it is difficult to identify where the problem lies. Any suggestions as to how this problem can be resolved more quickly?

ANGELA: Unfortunately there is no quick fix for this - getting back to the root of what everyone is trying to achieve and outlining the process so far is a good start. Ask more questions and use more dialogue to get rid of any assumptions or ambiguity.

Q: People can come to meetings with preconceived ideas for how things are operating/progressing...when you try and counter these assumptions, they refuse to believe you - any way I can overcome this?

ANGELA: This is a difficult one, as it is often a case of organisational culture overriding common sense. People can get siloed into areas/departments and become very defensive. Often, having a senior person delivering the news can help (although this does feel a bit like failure!) - at a higher level, senior management needs to get behind initiatives and communicate this support, within organisations. This is related to another question someone asked - they felt often they weren't being taken seriously as a project manager because they were seen as too young. Again, in this case, it is a case of a closed minded culture, although confident body language can go some way towards breaking down some of the mis-assumptions.

Q: During meetings, people agree to actions points and then don't progress at all by the next meeting - even though they've agreed to get things done!

ANGELA: As with above, it's all about getting the senior management to walk the talk and trying to work around your bad meeting culture.

Q: During meetings, and bearing in mind different styles, are there any presentation tips you can give, to make a presentation easier to understand?

ANGELA: Using the 4 types of people, here are some quick tips I have picked up over the years;

For 'direct' types of people; Use short bullet points, overviews and obvious gains/losses.

For 'systematic' types of people; provide an appendix for them to take away, give them an opportunity to ask questions during the meeting.

For 'spirited' types of people; ask for ideas and feedback on progress so far.

For 'considerate' types of people; let them know what their involvement benefits the organisation and thank them for their work.

Q: I am planning a meeting and I know there are going to be some people attending who will be potentially disruptive and negative. Any ideas as to how I can plan for this?

ANGELA: A pre-meeting might help. Try and understand their motives and reasons and provide evidence to counter them.

Q: Bearing in mind the time constraints in meeting, how can I deal with people who want to go into more detail than there is time for?

ANGELA: This sounds like a difference of styles to me! Have a pre-meeting and provide additional information for their reference. Try and understand whether the information is really necessary to arrive at a solution, or whether it is really just a way for them to feel more comfortable by covering all the points (typical of 'systematics')?

As a note, a few of you asked about the questionnaire that determines your communication style - this is covered in the course itself. Hope to see some of you there!

Angela Pinnington - Business Skills Expert

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Q: If you have somebody who constantly monopolises the conversation during meetings, is there a way that you can get them to stop monopolising the conversation (nicely)?

ANGELA: One possible way around this is to invite others to participate and contribute, use a process that involves everyone. Ask specific questions of specific people. You will need to plan this beforehand.

Q: Can a person have more than one style of communication?

ANGELA: Yes, most people will have elements of all 4 types of communication styles within them - we should use more or less of each style depending on your audience.

Q: Is it possible to permanently change your communication style?

ANGELA: Yes you can (with work), but I wouldn't recommend this. The reason for this is that no one style is better than any other. Which one you use depends on what style is right for your audience.

Q: Is there any way to identify the person you are talking to as audio, visual or kinaesthetic?

ANGELA: Yes there is - if you are very perceptive, you may notice the way they learn. Ask a lot of questions, get everyone involved in doing things - this way you can pick up a clues to their preferences.

Q: Is this process more than just following an agenda?

ANGELA: A lot of this process is about being pre-prepared - having in mind what you want to get out of it - and then sticking your pre agreed strategy. However, there are other things involved, for example, if you are holding a meeting to solve a problem, then you have to have an agreed way to solve this that works for everyone. You also have to think about things like the decision making process that you are going to use.

Q: How do you manage effective communications in a virtual team spread around the globe?

ANGELA: The first thing to consider is that the same principles apply (although cultures will differ). A lot of these points are covered in the course, but tactics involve varying schedules, having face-to-face meeting, distributing written materials, knowing cross cultural issues and using varying media such as video. Bear in mind that the media you use, as part of the global communications strategy, should depend on your message and objectives; Is the message urgent, high/low impact etc. Common sense also features here - if you never talk to someone you aren't going to have as a good a relationship with them.

Q: Can I apply these techniques to workshops as well?

ANGELA: These techniques also apply to workshops - still have a TROEA (Topic, Recommendation, Evidence, Outcome, Action) and OMT (Outcome Measurement, Timing) in mind. Try and balance the 3 areas of meetings - process, experience and productivity.