

LESSON NUMBER 3

TASK: COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

CONDITION: In a small group discussion environment.

STANDARD:

- Define effective communication.
- Understand communication styles and barriers, cross-cultural misunderstandings and barriers.

TIME OF INSTRUCTION: 2 Hours

LEAD IN: One of the most important leadership skills is the ability to communicate effectively. Not only must you understand what you think you hear, you must understand what was actually said (and what is not said). During this block of instruction you will learn the importance of effective communication, and how it relates to you as a leader.

PART I. DEFINITION

Effective communications is defined as the successful exchange of information between individuals. An effective communicator is successful in establishing an active two-way link with another individual or group.

a. Prepare yourself by being focused. If you are not focused on receiving the message, you may not fully receive or understand. Listen closely to the words, voice, and non-verbal behavior of the other person and be aware of your own feelings.

b. Check partner. Verify what the individual communicating the message said. This ensures there is no misunderstanding.

c. Be positive and specific. Tell the person how their behavior will affect you or the unit; do not tell them that it may affect him/her. Tell the person exactly what you see and hear, but do not judge and/or evaluate their behavior (In other words do not threaten the person). Once you have threatened the person, the anxiety level rises and can block accurate hearing. When this occurs the communication process is hindered.

Suggested vignette for discussion: PVT Smith, came to work late and offers no reason why.

Discussion Questions: What would be an example of an improper response? What would be an example of a good response?

d. Congruent Behavior: means that your behavior matches your words (talking the talk and walking the walk).

e. *Incongruent Behavior*: is when your actions do not match what you say (talking the talk and not walking the walk).

Suggested vignette for discussion: If I tell you Army policy prohibits senior NCOs from dating subordinates in the same command, but as a senior NCO, I date my subordinates.

Discussion Questions: What type of behavior am I displaying? Are there instances in this unit where incongruent behavior has happened? If so, around what issues? Were they solved?

PART II: COMMUNICATION STYLES

1. *Styles of communication*. Styles are how you talk about something. Different styles result from different intentions. The Army contains soldiers who speak different languages, but even soldiers who speak the same language may use that language in different ways. What everyone must understand is that being different does not mean being inferior.

2. *There are four different styles of communication*. These styles when shifted dramatically change the message. Effective communication involves matching your intention with your style.

a. Style I is friendly, sociable, or playful. Used to keep things on an "even keel." Passes time and fills social voids. Not intended to change anything.

b. Style II is directive, persuasive, demanding, evaluative, blaming, or praising. This style usually involves tension or dissatisfaction; often involves an attempt to force change, shutting off exploration of issues; may lead to misunderstanding.

NOTE: Style II is usually ineffective for resolving issues. Not all style II is negative. Selling, bargaining, promoting, advocating, preaching, and lecturing often use Style II communication.

c. Style III is speculative, tentative, uncertain, searching, reflecting, exploring, or intellectual. It demonstrates willingness to examine, explore, and understand self or others.

NOTE: Style III is a limited style. Creates a climate for further exploration, but does little to encourage significant change in relationships.

d. Style IV is disclosing, revealing, explicit, responsive, accepting, and aware. Intentions and behaviors demonstrate a commitment to deal completely and congruently with an issue; expresses an intention to pursue an issue openly and directly.

NOTE: Style IV seeks to share a complete picture of self-awareness, fully and honestly with partner.

Discussion questions: Which is your communication style? Why does it work for you?

PART III. COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

1. *Communication Barriers.* The need to communicate is universal. The way we communicate are not universal and can cause problems in your unit. It is obvious that the Army consists of individuals who speak different languages, and even those who speak the same language speak in different ways. Misunderstanding is often a problem between soldiers who are very much alike, and poses an even greater barrier between those who are ethnically or culturally different.

2. *Language Barriers.* It is easy to see how misunderstandings can occur between individuals who speak different languages. Even with the use of a skilled translator, important meanings of a message may be lost. A language also functions more effectively when used in its cultural context. Mistakes in translation or interpretation between soldiers can be very costly. They can do a great deal of harm by creating misunderstandings within a unit.

3. *Physical Barriers.* Distance, heat and cold, individual's physical health, speech pattern, articulation, and pronunciation can hinder communication.

4. *Perceptual Barriers.* Past experience, hidden agendas (getting even with someone), stereotypes, noise and any factor that disrupts or confuses communication can the communication process.

Discussion questions: Have you seen or experienced any of these barriers demonstrated in this unit? How can we eliminate these barriers, so that we can work better?

PART IV. CROSS CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDING

Most misunderstandings among soldiers result from cross-cultural experiences and do not necessarily occur from only one episode or misunderstanding. One misunderstanding leads to another, which can lead to an unsuccessful encounter. Each side begins to blame the other. Sometimes soldiers involved in a cross-cultural exchange will become emotionally hooked on one or two components and miss the meaning or purpose of the message.

Discussion questions: Can you remember your last misunderstanding with another person in this section? Was it just one incident or more?

What have you heard said about people from the city, country, north, south, east or west?

PART V. BARRIERS TO CROSS-CULTURE COMMUNICATIONS

BARRIERS TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

- **SONGS, SYMBOLS, AND GESTURES**
- **ACCENTS**
- **JIVE AND JARGON**
- **LACK OF TRUST**

Discussion questions: Have the students give some examples of the above, and discuss how they may prevent some misunderstandings. If the class is diversely mixed, have students share with the class some examples of their experiences.

PART VI. CLOSING

During this block of instructions you learned the importance of communication, both verbal and non-verbal. As a soldier, effective communication is critical. What you say, and how well you say it, will be a major factor in your leadership abilities.