Seven Ways to Communicate with Confidence

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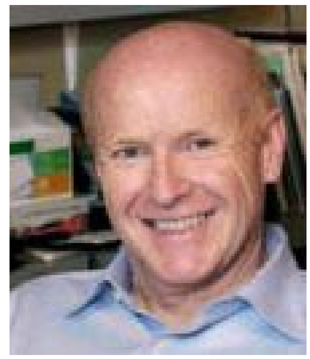

Whether talking to a prospect or making a recommendation to an existing client, many advisors believe that the key to effective communication is what you say.

As important – and maybe more important – is your delivery. The most carefully crafted sentences won't be persuasive if they're not delivered confidently and with conviction.

We fall into bad habits – we mumble, speak too softly, come across as tentative or fail to make effective eye contact. Or we unconsciously use "conversation fillers" such as "like," "um" or "you know" that can distract listeners and undermine effectiveness.

In other instances, our failure to communicate with confidence reflects reality – we aren't really confident in what we're saying and it shows. Perhaps we're in tough markets and are making difficult suggestions. Maybe we're talking to a client after previous recommendations haven't worked out. Or it could be that we're talking to an existing or prospective client that we don't really connect with or are a bit intimidated by.

Seven steps to communicate with confidence

Here are some ways to build more conviction into how you communicate with existing and prospective clients:

1. *Increase awareness*

   The first step on the road to communicating with confidence is to understand how important this is. In many regards, delivering our message with a level of conviction is job one for effective communication.

2. *Be confident yourself*

   It's hard to de confident in our delivery if we aren't reasonably confident. Whether talking to a prospective client about your value or recommending that an existing client get cash off the sidelines, even being a bit tentative will undermine the power of your message. Without falling into the trap of perpetual avoidance of difficult conversations, you may need to spend more time laying out the facts to raise your own confidence level.

3. *Prepare beforehand*

   One way to come across as more confident is to write down beforehand the key points that you're going to make.

   Remember the rule of three … research shows that three pieces of evidence are the optimum number to support your point - more persuasive than two and easier to absorb and less overwhelming than four.

   Write down the three points you're going to make to support your case … and then introduce these by saying, "There are three reasons it makes sense to proceed. First …., second ….., and finally…"

4. *Boost your energy level*

   Delivering your message with energy and enthusiasm inspires confidence.

   Build activities into your routine to boost your energy level. Start your day with a workout or a quick walk. Before an important meeting or phone call, take a five minute break to get some fresh air.

   And don't forget the small things. Going into a meeting, walk out to greet your clients briskly and with a smile on your face. If talking on the phone, some advisors find that standing actually helps them increase their energy level.

5. *Visualize the outcome*

   Before a meeting or a phone call, visualize yourself delivering recommendations with confidence. Professional athletes use visualization to help improve their performance; you can do the same.

6. *Monitor your conversations*

   Getting feedback can be critical to improvement. Tape some of your phone conversations and once a day spend five minutes playing them back. Or ask a senior colleague or manager to sit in on a meeting and give you suggestions for improvement afterwards.

7. *Get started*

Through his books and courses, starting in the 1920s Dale Carnegie had a huge impact on salespeople. Long before Nike coined *"Just do it,"* Carnegie wrote, "*Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action creates confidence and courage. Fear evaporates when we take action."*

To communicate with more confidence, pick one of these steps and begin today. That first step will pay big dividends in getting existing and prospective clients to buy into your recommendations.

Dan Richards conducts programs to help advisors gain and retain clients and is an award winning faculty member in the MBA program at the University of Toronto. To see more of his written and video commentaries, go to http://www.clientinsights.ca. Use A555A for the rep and dealer code to register for website access.