

Session 6

Connectors Connect on Common Ground

It is difficult to find common ground with others when the only person you are focused on is yourself!

I continue to work at learning how others think and perceive the world. Recently I read a book by Terry Felber called Am I Making Myself Clear? He says that people have different representational systems based on the five senses that provide the primary basis for their thoughts and feelings. For example, if several people walked down the beach together, their recollections of the experience would be very different based on their representational system. One might remember how the sun felt on his skin and sand on his feet. Another might remember the look of the water and the vivid colors of the sunset. The third might be able to describe the sounds of the ocean and birds, and another, the smell of the salty air and the tanning lotion of nearby sunbathers. Each of us creates a framework for the way we process information. Felber says, “If you can learn to pinpoint how those around you experience the world, and really try to experience the same world they do, you’ll be amazed at how effective your communication will become.” That’s simply another way to look for common ground.

Barriers To Finding Common Ground

1. _____ – “I already know what others know, feel, and want.”
“All miscommunications are a result of differing assumptions.” —Jerry Ballard
2. _____ – “I don’t need to know what others know, feel, or want.”
Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis observed, “Nine-tenths of the serious controversies that arise in life result from misunderstanding, from one man not knowing the facts which to the other man seem important, or otherwise failing to appreciate his point of view.”

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3. _____ – “I don’t care to know what others know, feel, or want.”

Comedian George Carlin joked, “Scientists announced today that they had found a cure for apathy. However, they claim no one has shown the slightest bit of interest in it.”

4. _____ – “I don’t want others to know what I know, feel, or think.”

I love Jim Lundy’s take on this in his book, Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way. In it, he includes the response of people who work in an environment where leaders hold back from them. He writes about the “Subordinates Lament,” which says, “We the uninformed, working for the inaccessible, are doing the impossible for the ungrateful!” And the “Mushroom Farm Lament” goes like this: “We feel we’re being kept in the dark. Every once in a while someone comes around and spreads manure on us. When our heads pop up, they’re chopped off. And then we’re canned.”

Choices That Will Help You Find Common Ground

1. _____ – I will choose to spend time with others.

2. _____ – I will listen my way to common ground.

Sonya Hamlin in her book, How to Talk So People Listen, notes that most people find this difficult because of the “Me-First Factor.” She writes,

Listening requires giving up our favorite human pastime—involvement in ourselves and our own self-interest. It’s our primary, entirely human focus. And it’s where our motivation to do anything comes from. With this as a base, can you see what a problem is created when we’re asked to listen to someone else?

3. _____ – I will be interested enough in others to ask questions.

4. _____ – I will think of others and look for ways to help them.

5. _____ – I will let people into my life.

6. _____ – I will care about people.

Roger Ailes, a former communication consultant to presidents, believes the most influential factor in public speaking is likeability. He says that if people like you, they will listen to you, and if they don’t, they won’t.

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7. _____ – I will think of myself less so I can think of others more.

Poet, journalist, and editor Alan Ross asserted, “Humility means knowing and using your strength for the benefit of others, on behalf of a higher purpose. The humble leader is not weak, but strong...is not pre-occupied with self, but with how best to use his or her strengths for the good of others. A humble leader does not think less of himself, but chooses to consider the needs of others in fulfilling a worthy cause. I love to be in the presence of a humble leader because they bring out the very best in me. Their focus is on my purpose, my contribution, and my ability to accomplish all I set out to accomplish.”

Humility is...

- (1) A capacity for _____.
- (2) Allowing _____ to shine.

8. _____ – I will move from my world to theirs.

To Connect on Common Ground, Ask...

- Do I feel what you feel BEFORE asking “Do you feel what I feel?”
- Do I see what you see BEFORE asking “Do you see what I see?”
- Do I know what you know BEFORE asking “Do you know what I know?”
- Do I know what you want BEFORE asking “Do you know that I want?”

Key Concept: Know the reasons you and your listener want to communicate and build a bridge between them.

Question: “What is the bridge you need to build to connect on common ground?”