

Jorge Klapproth

Effective communication

as a key to success
for managers

The art of convincing and winning
over others to achieve ones´ goals

CMC

The book

Communication means understanding others. This seems so simple and is yet so complex. Because in the professional world, communication is more than just understanding. It is a strategic instrument for achieving goals and a key to personal and professional success.

Especially senior managers need to be able to convince at all levels and in all situations: dealing with colleagues, clients, in discussions or contract negotiations. This can only be achieved with good and efficient communication skills.

In this book, communication trainer Jorge Klapproth offers some valuable insights how to improve communication skills in important situations. He offers possible solutions and strategies for targeted and effective communication.

The author



Jorge Klapproth, born in 1961, is a communication and media trainer, he works as a consultant and executive coach for enterprises, organisations, associations, authorities and public figures. He advises and trains senior managers and those responsible for corporate communication in the areas of strategic and crisis communication.

Jorge Klapproth studied telecommunication engineering at the University of the Bundeswehr in Munich. As the owner and head coach of CMC Kommunikation + Medien, he specialises in preparing senior managers for their appearances on TV, radio, or in front of an audience. He has outlined the dialectics between effective communication and successfully reaching one's objectives in numerous publications, lectures and seminars.

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For Ruth

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Preface

When speaking of communication, we often mean the act of verbally expressing ourselves, of telling something, conversing, exchanging information or holding a presentation. Technical communication, such as the transfer of data from a sender to a receiver via technical stratagems, is also often referred to as communication.

However, I see this as a part of telecommunication. So, what is my understanding of communication, its effectiveness and influence as described in this book?

I consider communication to be a lot more than the simple exchange of thoughts or information. For me, it is a complex system within the framework of social interaction. This means that communication always has a certain impact on people whether received or sent - intentionally or unintentionally.

Communication is a wholesome process of impressing and influencing others. Hence, it is so much more than only the spoken or written word. Therefore, it is more than rhetoric. Undoubtedly, verbal communication plays a significant role in how we influence our environment. However, it is still only a part of the process.

A significant part of personal communication also lies in the entire appearance and the impression a person makes on others. This can be influenced. This book describes this wholesome process and the possibilities for influencing

others to reach one's goals through effective communication.

This book is divided into eight chapters. First we will gain an overview of the basics of communication psychology. This is important to understand how and why people react to certain stimuli. After that, we will examine the question of building trust. For what do we need the trust of others with whom we communicate. Sometimes we fail to gain trust despite all our efforts because of disturbances in our communication, of which we are not aware.

This will be discussed in the third chapter of this book. Following this, we will focus on the power of images.

Why do pictures have such a strong impact on us?

Why are we able to process pictures faster and more sustainably than written texts or the spoken word?

How can we employ pictures to communicate efficiently?

These questions will be answered in chapter four.

How can we deal with difficult situations?

Sometimes we have to face difficult discussions, e.g. when having to lay-off an employee or having to give negative feedback within a performance review, or when an employee surprisingly develops in a negative way. How can we handle such difficult situations?

This will be dealt with in the fifth chapter of this book.

In this course, we will also look at possibilities to steer these conversations. That is to influence the content. Because

only if we manage to make “our” issues the centre of the discussion, can we position our key messages. This will be a recurring theme throughout this book.

In chapter seven we will look at negotiations. Because if we want to convince, we naturally need good arguments next to an array of other important tools of effective communication.

Finally, we will also take a look at the possibilities of using unfair rhetorical methods and strategies. Because if we do not realise which methods a conversationalist uses within a discussion or a difficult negotiation, we might easily fall for them and underlie the other’s opinion or interpretation. And with this our aim to achieve our goals may be endangered.

For this reason, it is important to consider questions regarding efficient and impactful communication time and time again within the context of the respective occasions.

This book will not reinvent the wheel of communication. You will discover a lot, which you will have already heard of or read about in this or a similar form.

This is intended. This book functions as an alternative to the present communication behaviour.

It should function as a help, inspiration, and tool to become more sensitive for communication. So if the one or other reader finds something new, lost or forgotten, then I will be happy, and this book has served its purpose.

A final note: This book addresses both female and male executives alike. For easier reading, however, only the male form has been used.

I hope this book takes you on an interesting journey and that you enjoy the read.

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Introduction

Success? What exactly does success mean? Surely the meaning differs for each and every one of us. There is the sportive success, success in school, during studies, in professional and private life. The list can be carried on endlessly.

This book is concerned with success in communication as this is paramount for managers on all levels of hierarchy. And with successful communication the success in the other goals will also come. Managers must communicate everywhere - with employees, superiors, customers, journalists, suppliers, the public or with authorities. In a nutshell - they must convince at all levels. This can only be achieved through good and effective communication.

Communication means understanding. This seems so simple, yet it is so complex. In our professional world, communication is a strategic instrument to achieve one's aims, and thus, a personal and professional key to success.

Who hasn't asked himself in important discussions: "Have I been understood correctly? Have I gotten through to my counterpart?" Not rarely do we fail to find an answer, or we only find a negative one, if the conversation did not go well. But why do some conversations not work?

To convince and win someone for your ideas, you need to master the rules for verbal and non-verbal communication. In combination with a clear message, a goal-orientated conversation creates credibility and trust.

Over 2500 years ago, the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle already defined three factors that are necessary to convince others: competence, sympathy and credibility.

The following applies to any situation: There is no second chance for a first impression! No matter whether in a personal conversation with employees and customers, in a presentation or at a works meeting: the basics of communication are always the same.

The manner in which people talk with each other often decides whether a negotiation is successful or whether it fails. In the end, it is not so much the numbers, the data, or facts, i.e. the pure transfer of knowledge that counts, but rather the impression a speaker has made on someone.

And in the end, this impression is usually either positive or negative. Sometimes it is also neutral. Especially if one has not yet convinced the other, but there are still some reasons to believe in a positive outcome.

It is about creating credibility. As credibility creates - trust - and trust is the basis for a good cooperation.

But can credibility be created?

Credibility and trust are soft factors and are obtained on an emotional level. Someone who cannot reach others on an emotional level cannot convince, no matter how good his numbers, data, facts or arguments are. One simply does not believe him. For this reason, it is important to establish a clear relationship between one another in any conversation.

The German communication scientist and psychologist, Friedemann Schulz von Thun, developed the "four-ear-model" according to which we all listen on four different levels. The model is also known under the name, "four-sides

model". Schulz von Thun speaks of four sides of a message. These four sides apply both when speaking and listening. How does this model work?

In each conversation, the recipient of a message extends four "antennas", as Schulz von Thun says, with which the recipient examines what has been said. He listens with four ears simultaneously. If one of the four antennas registers a disturbance, the conversation is already disharmonious.

Establishing a clear relationship between the communication partners is vital. It can be a partnership at eye level, the relationship between a superior and his subordinate or a formal relationship between people who have no further points of contact otherwise.

The conversing partners define the type of relationship at the beginning of their conversation, through their behaviour and what they say: distanced, friendly, cooperative, etc. This definition greatly determines the course or the success of a conversation and of communication in general.

A conversation is the strongest of all means of communication. It has a direct impact on the conversational partners and, therefore, plays a significant role in daily business and strategic decisions.

What are the mechanisms of successful negotiations?

To hold your own ground in critical situations, such as in a discussion with journalists or the appearance in front of an audience, isn't black art - you can learn it! If you master the basic rules of communication, you can steer the effects and thus, can achieve your own goals.

In the following, we will deal with possible solutions for goal-oriented and effective communication.

Chapter 1

A little communication psychology

Global flows of communication

Communication is a highly complex framework that reaches people on all levels of consciousness. Billions of communication streams permanently flow across the globe in all directions. Many of these streams reach the recipient unfiltered and aim to influence, inform or court someone, or to make someone perform a specific action or purchase a particular product. We are constantly exposed to communication streams. In the office, at home, in the car, at school, in front of the TV - basically always and everywhere. Even if we are alone, we may read a book, worry about something or talk to ourselves. The same applies to sleep, our brain does not stop working and continues to produce supposedly unsorted currents of thoughts that we sometimes remember as dreams.

This flood of information must be filtered and bundled, if we do not want to mentally succumb to this "information overflow", this "vast amount" of information, which we are exposed to. Sometimes this cannot be achieved and those affected actually suffer a nervous breakdown maybe because the perceived stress is too much to take at the

specific time, or because the body needs a mental break. In such situations, the so-called "emergency button" is pressed to preserve the affected from even greater harm.¹

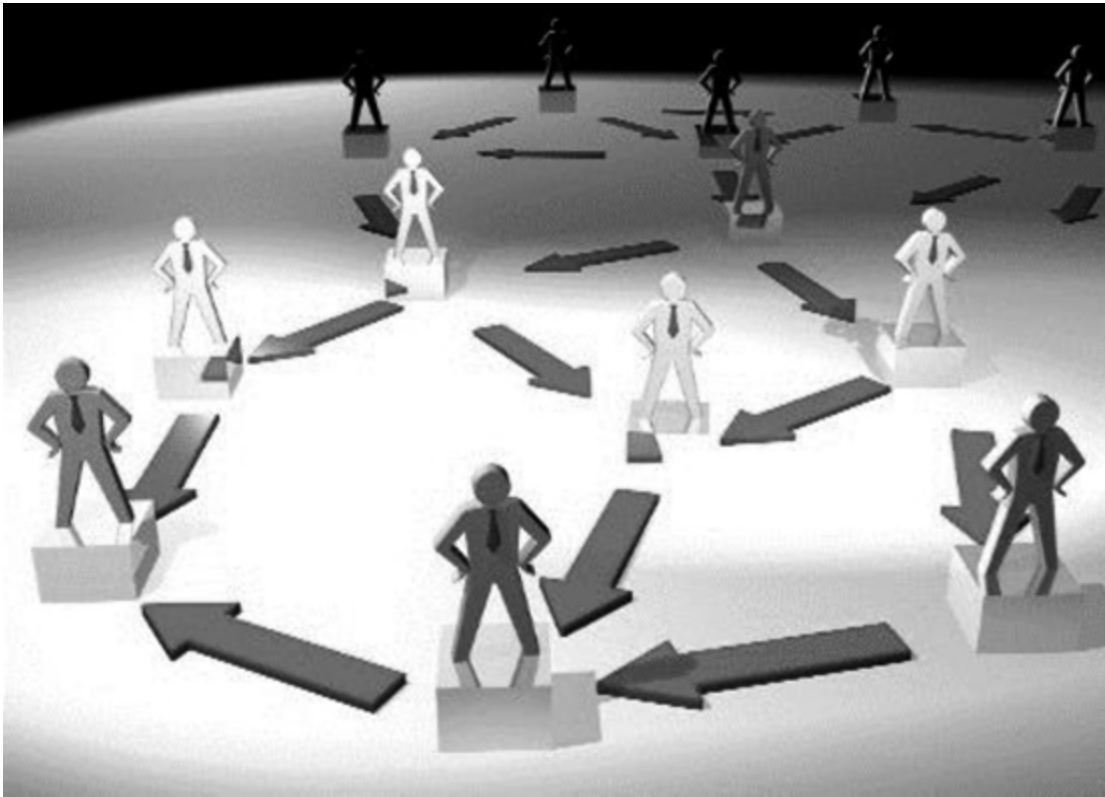


Figure 1:Communication flow

If everything works well, man has some protective functions which help us separate the important from the unimportant, the essential from the not so vital, and the interesting from the not so interesting information.

We all are subject to a subjective and selective perception of our environment. As a result, we do not perceive everything with equal intensity. If I am interested in a new car, for example, say a black VW Golf, I may suddenly see more black VW golfs on our streets than ever before. Another example: When women are pregnant, they automatically have a heightened awareness of everything related to young children. They are "programmed" on this topic.

This subjective and selective perception also applies to other areas, such as the mood, disposition, areas of interest, expertise, education, gender, cultural origin and so on. These builtin filters help us to limit the immense flood of information and process it into the right channels.

In conversations, it is therefore crucial to find the right channel of interest gain access to my conversation partner. Because, if we don't find it and cannot pass the other's filter system we must ask ourselves:

“Why am I not understood?”

Communication skills for managers

What does "communication skills" as a core competence for managers mean?

Let us begin with the concept of communication itself. The word comes from the Latin "COMMUNICARE" and means something like share, inform, participate, or jointly do something. The term "Commune", signifying a political, social community of a city or town can be derived from the word stem. Or the word "Communism", as a way of life for communities. If we consider this, the word "communication" can be understood as something we have in common, or is shared with others.

To gain trust, we must communicate as social beings. Our survival depends on the community. No one can be completely alone - therefore, we need to communicate. In private, in our daily business, and in business negotiations.²



Figure 2: The conversation

Good communication is the heart of every organization, every company, every community. Therefore, a person's communication skills are decisive, for how successful he will be within this organization. Our professional performance greatly depends on how well we communicate messages and feelings as well as on how good we are in receiving such information.

For managers, good communication skills are a key qualification. Because managers have to convince their employees, colleagues, superiors, customers and potentially also the public. They should provide insights, enthuse, inspire, be an example, minimise weaknesses, further strengths- in short: They must be convincing on all levels. Credibility is crucial to gain the necessary trust of the people they deal with. This is only possible with good and effective communication!

The strategic approach³



Figure 3: Strategy

Why do so many conversations fail? And how can you communicate effectively?

These are the two questions we want to deal with first.

Communication is much more than just a kind of understanding or communication between people. It is an instrument. A strategic instrument for achieving one' aims. And with this it is a personal success factor for everyone.

Communication as a regulatory instrument

Applied purposefully, communication should first and foremost serve and influence the soft factors: create understanding, enhance acceptance, relieve anxiety, or organize support for your ideas and plans. Communication therefore serves as a regulatory instrument that affects opinion building among target groups. Used strategically, it can fully unfold its effect and produce the desired result. It is important to always be aware of the effect of your own communication and to employ it as an instrument for achieving one's aims.

Now, of course, it depends on our goal, what form of communication we use. Naturally, this can greatly differ. Strategic communication is concerned with *how* we communicate to achieve our goals.

Communication serves as a regulatory instrument that affects opinion building among target groups

Forms of communication

Verbal und nonverbal communication

The communication theorist Paul Watzlawick said: "One cannot *not* communicate". This means that every form of reaction, even no reaction, is communication und has a certain meaning. In particular, we distinguish between the verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. All Spoken and written communication is considered verbal. Basically everything that can be expressed in words. The non-verbal communication, on the other hand, describes all other forms of expression: facial expressions, gestures, sounds, and any reaction - even no reaction, except for the spoken or written word. However, the conversation is but the strongest and

most immediate means of communication. Because with a conversation we reach our counterpart both on a factual *and* on an emotional level. And this is often the requisite to achieve our goals.

One cannot *not* communicate

Factors of disturbance within communication

As stated at the beginning: Sometimes a perhaps important conversation fails. We can try as we want: We simply cannot connect with our counterpart. As if it were cursed. No matter what we do or how well we think we communicate – it will not work!

What are the reasons for this?

What are common factors of disturbance in a conversation?

Let us take a look at a few examples.

Factor of disturbance 1:

Communication does not always work

One of the main problems in communication is that it is generally assumed that it works!

This factor of disturbance in communication describes the fact that feedback as to whether one has been understood is often missing. Not only in the physical sense, whether one is acoustically understood. Rather it should be of utmost importance that the message can be intellectually processed.

If this is not the case, there may be numerous reasons for this: For example, the vocabulary use, a lack of expert knowledge, a different cultural background or also a lack of vocabulary.

Whatever the reason: without feedback whether one has been understood, every conversation is strategically prone to be worthless. In these moments, we simply do not know whether communication works.

How can I get feedback?

In the German Army, there was long the good tradition that a command given by a superior had to be repeated in turn by his subordinate soldiers. By this, the superior could be sure that the subordinate would then act correctly and accordingly. Things have also changed at the German Army. This strict and formal form of repeating an oral command is now only rarely applied. In contrast to former days, communication is no longer a one-way system, but more of a dialog.

In the civilian as in the military environment, work assignments are rather *discussed* to directly clarify any ambiguities related to the task. Though skilful questioning the superior can check whether he has been understood not only acoustically but whether the meaning of what has been said has been grasped. In doing so, the employee does not get the negative feeling of being reviewed.

The same can be said for strategic conversations: Rather than merely commenting make sure the conversation is a dialog and ask questions. By this you can see whether your message has been received.

For example you could ask the employee you have just assigned a task:

“How much time do you think you will need to do this?”

“Do you have everything you need?”

These questions signal appreciation and trust. At the same time, the answers will help you conclude how well the employee has understood the task.

Factor of disturbance 2:

The “I” in us

A significant factor of disturbance in effective communication is the self. Man is a hundred times closer to himself than to his environment.

“I”

Man’s striving for recognition

Thus, the own problems are usually more important than an earthquake in distant China or the ozone hole over the Antarctic. The needs of the other also often disappears behind one’s own interests. This then causes both conversation partners to talk about matters that are important to themselves, but neither really responds to the other. Hence, a functional conversation hardly takes place. Information is exchanged, however it does not fall onto good ground. The “soft objectives” such as to convince, create understanding or reduce reservations, etc. cannot be achieved in this manner.

Which strategic objective should then be attained if one or in the works case both interlocutors only speak of their own issues? Conversations should always be held at “eye level”. This means that the conversation partner should always be met with respect. Even if one puts aside one’s need for

recognition should one be of other opinion. It is important to somewhat put aside one's aspiration for recognition to create a balanced dialog in which the others arguments and thoughts are considered.

Only in doing this can we ensure that our counterpart will not lose interest in the conversation, or gain a negative impression of us due to our self-centeredness. This would negatively influence the course of the dialog at hand and on all future discussions respectively. This brings us to

Factor of disturbance 3:

Repressed virtue - listening

Self-centeredness often results in not listening to what the other has said. Not listening bears a huge problem!

Subconsciously our counterpart registers that we are not following him with our thoughts. A conversation can quickly end if one of the interlocutors has the feeling that the other is not making the effort to pay attention to him. The relationship is then soon damaged if one of the interlocutors does not feel recognised appropriately. If we want to counter this, we must pay attention to the other's matters so that he feels appropriately recognised. Why do we sometimes not pay attention?

Did you know that the human brain can process 450 words per minute?

Listen! - To! - Me!
Repressed virtue: Listening.

However, we only talk at a speed of approximately 175 words per minute. We think three times as fast as we can put our thoughts into words. This means that our