Tips for Effective Communication

Six Basics

1 – Know your audience - Internal vs. external

Questions to consider about each audience
(*Example: Audience is property owners concerned about reassessments*)

- Why we communicate (what's in it for them)
    - Anticipate questions
    - Allay fears
    - Respond to concerns
- What we communicate (type of content)
    - Simple background of the process
    - Why the increase is necessary
    - How the process is administered
- How we communicate (platforms)
    - Template responses to phone calls and email inquiries
    - Website copy
    - News release
    - Fact sheet illustrating reason for reassessment
    - Social media posts

2 – Keep your words simple

- Avoid showy, flowery language (EX: The most lovely lady in her exquisitely embroidered gown delicately flitted her way toward the most absolutely divinely decorated veranda that circumnavigates the early 1920s home of her paternal grandfather.)
- Avoid absolutes if they aren't completely true (EX: truly innovative, perfectly aligned, life changing)
- Avoid mumbo jumbo (EX: key strategic assets primed for growth)
- Avoid hackneyed, cliche or trite phrases (EX: at the end of the day, treasure trove, double edged sword)
- Why use a long word when a short one will do?

Instead of	Try this
utilize	use
ascertain	learn
attempt	try
demonstrate	show
in a timely manner	on time
obtain	get
pertaining to	about
for the duration of	during
witnessed	saw
commence	start

3 – Avoid acronyms, abbreviations and industry jargon

- Never assume the audience/reader knows the insider baseball references

4 – Build a narrative

- Story + data = compelling narrative
- Speak from what you know

5 – Don't fear verbal white space

- Pace
- Breath
- Takes back control of the conversation

6 - Be prepared

- You be you
  - Don't force habits that won't work for you
  - Know your strengths and play to those while working on your personal challenges
- Breathe
  - Box or rectangular breaths – inhale four through your nose, exhale four through your mouth
- Practice
  - Speak to yourself in the mirror
  - Record
  - Enlist trusted colleagues

Credibility busters

- Upspeak – a declarative sentence that sounds like a question
  - Can make a speaker sound uncertain
- Body language – audience can see you before they hear you

- Incorrect grammar

  I / me

    - Yes: He's going with John and me.
    - No: He's going with John and I.

  you're /your

    - Yes: You're my favorite cousin who lets me wear your sweater.
    - No: Your my favorite cousin who lets me wear you're sweater.

  their / there / they're

    - Yes: They're going to eat their food over there.
    - No: There going to eat they're food over their.

  it's / its

    - Yes: The store just celebrated its tenth anniversary since moving here.
    - No: The store just celebrated it's tenth anniversary since moving here.

  Apostrophes

    - Yes: Happy holidays from the Merkles.
    - No: Happy holidays from the Merkle's.

  Passive voice - Subject receives action of the verb
    - Can make a speaker sound evasive or unwilling to share specific details
    - Often heard in law enforcement situations

      A wad of cash, two gold necklaces and a gun were found under the living room couch.

      <p style="text-align:center">OR</p>

      The officers found a wad of cash, two gold necklaces and a gun under the living room couch.

      <p style="text-align:center">OR</p>

      The neighborhood kids found a wad of cash, two gold necklaces and a gun under the living room couch.

Credibility builders

- Breathe – verbal white space
- Clarity – no "um," "like," etc.
- Practice – use a mirror, record, have someone listen/watch

AI for the future? *

- **Generational Awareness Divide**: While younger generations (ages 18-24) are more aware of AI tools, 31 percent of the general population still lacks knowledge of AI.
- **Academic and Professional Integration**: 38 percent of respondents use AI for work or study, with usage highest among younger people, residents of the Western U.S. and higher-income groups. Trust and lack of skills remain significant barriers to broader adoption, particularly among older populations.
- **Ethical and Privacy Concerns**: Only 27 percent of respondents are aware of ethical guidelines around AI, and 12 percent report privacy concerns. Ethical concerns are notably higher among women and more educated individuals.
- **Impact on Journalism:** While 46 percent of Americans see AI positively influencing journalism, concerns about misinformation persist, with trust in the press and educational institutions correlating with favorable views.
- **Future of Work:** 52 percent of respondents express fear of job losses due to AI, while 29 percent anticipate job transformation requiring new skills. Younger generations are more optimistic about AI's potential in reshaping the workforce.

Source: University of South Carolina College of Information and Communications AI Index research