

## Smart Strategies

### Solutions for Workplace Challenges

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Spring is almost here... really! I'm ready for gardening, what are your spring plans?

Krieger Solutions is moving more solidly into webinars. Our February pilot was a great success and we've got two series planned for this spring - one focusing on high performance leadership and one on critical people skills. (See the announcement below.)

In this issue of our newsletter we revisit communication, a key skill for leadership, the workplace and life.

Finally, while the calendar says it's spring time... the winter wind says otherwise. So we need some laughter to warm us up.

Hope you enjoy the humor.



Alan Krieger

*Feel free to forward this to friends and colleagues.*

## Communication Strategies

As the quotes to the right show, communication can be difficult and inexact! The goal in communication is to be sure the other person accurately interprets your message and receives it in as positive a way as possible. Your good intentions don't count if the other person doesn't perceive them that way.

For example, giving advice to someone who is upset and needs to vent, might reflect your good intentions to be helpful, but it can be received as dismissive of their concerns, uncaring, and controlling... or just



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## Communication Humor

All my life, I always wanted to be somebody. Now I see that I should have been more specific.

~Jane Wagner, The Search  
For Intelligent Life In  
The Universe, performed  
by Lily Tomlin

won't be received at all since they're too upset to hear you.

For those of you familiar with my TEAM communication styles model, giving a detailed message to a T or an E will cause their eyes to glaze over, their ears to close and their brain to move on to something more interesting. Your critically important message with many important details is lost in the noise. (If you're not familiar with TEAM, see webinar announcement below.)

Similarly, painting a big picture of a situation and showing lots of connections and relationships will be totally lost on the A and T, as will telling them stories when they want to hear about a task. Not taking the time to check in a meaningful way every day on a personal level will be insulting to the M, but greatly appreciated by the T.

Communication is tough! How do you communicate accurately, effectively and helpfully? A few quick tips:

1. Take time to listen! Listen with your eyes as well as ears. Ask questions when you're confused, when your eyes tell you one thing and your ears something else. Body language can be hard to read correctly, so be sure to check out your assumptions. Cultural differences in our global world make this even more complex.
2. Paraphrase - everyone knows that this is important, but few actually do it. Count the number of times in one day that you paraphrase. If it's less than 5, you're not listening actively! (Be cautious with paraphrasing people who are T's, the other 3 styles love it.) Paraphrasing is the ONLY way you can be sure you fully understand the other person's true message.
3. Speak so others understand you. Adapt to the communication style of your listener. Read their body language as you speak to see if it's consistent with your message. If not, ask questions. If they don't paraphrase you... ask them to, but use caution.

This is tricky. DON'T ask them to repeat back what you just said... that's insulting. Instead, ask them what they think about what you just said, or what they'll do with the information you gave them, or how they feel about your message (this is especially good with M's). If you're dealing with a short answer person ("it's fine") - typical of teenagers and the T style... then their initial response is probably not enough.

The surest sign that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe is that it has never tried to contact us.

~Bill Watterson  
Calvin and Hobbes

Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes.

~Author Unknown

## CULTURAL COMMUNICATION CONFUSION

Simple gestures and body language that we think we all understand can get very confusing as you talk with people from other cultures.

### The "Okay" gesture:

- Is obscene in Afghanistan, Brazil, Turkey, Greece, Malta and some Asian cultures.
- It means "zero" in France, Belgium, and parts of South East Asian.
- It is a threat in Tunisia.

### Business "Personal Space":

- In US mainstream culture, people generally stand about one "arm's length" apart when talking.
- In Latino, Middle Eastern and South European cultures, people stand less than arms' length apart.
- In Northern European and some African and Asian cultures, people stand further than an arms' length apart.

Without being annoying, pursue it a bit further. *"I'm glad you're OK with this, but I want to be sure you heard my message the way I meant it. (Here's the critical part...) I'm not sure I said it as clearly as I could... would you summarize what you heard so I know I said it clearly?"* This puts any implied criticism on you and not them which should make it easier to get a good answer. This should get everyone but the most difficult person, to give you some helpful feedback. Be cautious with this; don't use it for every message, just the real important ones.

4. When dealing with people you'd rather avoid.... Think hard about their communication preferences and try to match their approach. If they are short and to the point, focus your message. If they are talkative and negative, be prepared to listen for awhile before you deliver your message. If they ramble on and tell stories, build more stories into your presentation and be prepared to listen. If they are very critical and negative, see the good side of this - if there's a problem out there, they'll find it for you! Put on a thicker skin, don't take it personally, and paraphrase their concerns and continue to repeat your core message - don't get pulled off message, but do take time to listen.

5. And finally, the most uncomfortable part for many people... giving corrective feedback. Start with the premise that you are trying to correct something, not criticize. The gentlest and easiest approach is the "Yes, and". It's simple, brilliant and yet almost no one uses it!! We mostly use the "yes, but" which totally deflates the other person, and may make them angry and defensive.

The "Yes, and" starts with something positive, and builds a bridge from that to something else positive that you'd like to see more of. For example: *"You do a great job talking to our customers... they feel appreciated and listened to. It would be great if you could try to keep these conversations a little shorter and more focused."* If they respond well, you can follow up with: *"Do you have any thoughts about how you could do that?"*

The "Yes, and" is so gentle that many people won't know that they've been criticized, which is perfect... if they change. If this doesn't work, the next step up is to be more direct. Don't start this conversation with something positive; go directly to the corrective feedback. Feedback (positive or corrective) should be about *behavior* not attitude, thoughts or feelings. Feedback should also

#### Eye contact:

- In the Native American Indian culture eye contact is not direct, but instead it is acceptable to look everywhere except in someone's eye.
- With Russians, eye contact speaks of honesty and openness.
- In mainstream U.S. culture, lack of eye contact is judged as lack of attention, lack of interest, lack of self-esteem or dishonesty.
- In many Asian cultures, Latino cultures and African cultures, direct eye contact can be judged as rude disrespectful, aggressive or flirtatious, especially with older or "higher status" people.

#### Thumbs up:

- Is obscene in much of the Middle East and Australia.

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include the *impact* of the behavior, answer the "so what" question.

For example: *"When you talk with our customers, you frequently allow the conversations to go far off the topic. This results in very long conversations which prevents you from doing your other work. As a result your co-workers have to do more and this builds resentment on the team."* STOP here. DO NOT go on to solutions until you are sure the other person has heard what you said and is ready to accept it. They have to agree that the behavior happened (long conversations) and the impact is real and meaningful (it matters that they take too long with the conversations).

Most people will get defensive after getting this kind of direct feedback and you have to respond to that by listening, paraphrasing and acknowledging (but not agreeing with) their thoughts and feelings. Once you've done that and they've calmed down a bit, then revisit the feedback and see if they acknowledge that: 1. The behavior you described did happen and, 2. The impact you noted is real and significant. Once they acknowledge both of these, then you can move on to problem solving. If they don't acknowledge this, give them time to cool off and try again.

Next issue of the newsletter we'll describe a technique for working with especially tough feedback situations, called "thought transference".

Try these out and let me know what you think.  
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## SPRING WEBINAR SERIES

Krieger Solutions, LLC will be presenting two webinar series this spring, each with three programs. One series focuses on high performance leadership skills and the other on critical people skills. Both series start with a session on the TEAM communication and work styles model - a simple and powerful model for understanding why people act in very different ways. Participants will be given access to a self-assessment tool to help them better understand their style.

### **High Performance Leadership Series:**

This series continues with a program that explores a supervisor's greatest frustration - why employees

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You may also reprint any of these articles as long as you include the following in the reprint and send a copy to me at [alan@krsol.com](mailto:alan@krsol.com):

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[www.kriegersolutions.com](http://www.kriegersolutions.com)"**

## Spring Webinar Series Schedule

The Critical People Skills series will be on April 26, May 10 and May 31 from 10:30-11:30 am.

The High Performance Leadership series is April 28, May 12 and June 2 from 1:30-2:30 pm.

If you would like to sign up for a session, but have a scheduling conflict, we can provide you, for the same cost, a copy of the handouts and 30 days access to an archived copy of the recorded session a few days after it ends.

*don't do* what you want them to. The third session spotlights the foundation of performance management - holding staff accountable in a positive way to build high performance.

**People Skills Series:**

This continues with two sessions exploring what most disrupts people's comfort and satisfaction in the workplace: difficult people and the resulting conflicts. One session looks at how to work with difficult people to defuse tense situations, build better connections, and resolve issues as they come up to prevent conflicts from arising. The other session will give you some tools for approaching conflicts in a more constructive manner and helping you resolve some of the more intractable conflicts.

Alan Krieger will present all the sessions to ensure continuity between programs.

You can sign up for any or all of the sessions, and we guarantee your satisfaction.

You'll be receiving an email next week with information on how to register. For those of you who completed our survey in December, this will be an opportunity to cash in your coupon for a free webinar. Email Pam Fenoff, [pam@krsol.com](mailto:pam@krsol.com), our Office Manager if you have any questions.

**Thanks for  
subscribing and for  
any comments  
you send.**

*Alan*

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