Crossing Thresholds
Module 4

Communicating with Impact

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Agenda – Communicating with impact

Day 1

Morning

- Individual progress updates
- The 1-2-3 of communication
- Using structure and headlines
- Undermining language habits

Afternoon

- Thinking on your feet
- Giving difficult feedback
- Practice session in small groups
- Next steps and review of the module

Suggested self-directed activities for day 2 and beyond

Individual Activities

Think about who you need to give difficult feedback to and think about what you want the feedback process to achieve.

Practise using the 1-2-3 of communication for a piece of written communication.

Find 3 opportunities to use headlines in the next week.

In Peer Groups

Deliver your 3 minute presentation to your peer group and get feedback.

Role play difficult feedback scenarios, with different people playing different roles. Reflect on what did/didn't work and how it feels to be on the receiving end of difficult feedback.

Challenge each others' undermining language habits

When you have time

Shadow people in different kinds of meetings and talk to them about what they have learned about being effective in meetings.

Seek feedback about your impact in meetings from people whose opinions you respect.

These are our suggestions – if you have other ideas, either individually or as a Peer Group, please feel free to pursue them

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Creating impactful messages – 3 top tips

Every time you communicate…

1   Laser-like focus on the result you want

Instead of starting with "what is all the information I want to give" we suggest focussing first on **what is the outcome** you want from this specific communication. Break it down into chunks.

Think about the **action** you want the audience to take as a result of your communication

Your desired impact: think about something that is measurable – how are you going to know if you've achieved it?

2   Obsess about your audience!

Your messages can get tainted with assumptions and feelings about yourself and/or the audience. **Be curious!** Who are they? What's their background? What do they want? What knowledge do they already have? If you want them to take action - what influence or authority do they have?

Make it specific to them If you want people to make a shift or take action, consider the questions/objections they are going to have – what genuine reasons do they have to object? Time/resources/ability

Get inside their head Connect with people's interests. Address their real concerns and needs. Relate to them as people. Get inside their heads to move them towards your goal. Share your passion!

3   What key messages will take your audience to your desired outcome?

Give your audience useful information upon which to act effectively. **Keep it simple!** Avoid vague language, jargon and abstract concepts.

Use structure Have a punchy, attention grabbing start, know where you are going. Keep focussed on the key points. Leave your audience in no doubt about what action they need to take.

Remember - your communication is a gift you are giving to your audience. Just like you, they want to do a good job. **Don't beat about the bush or shy away from tough messages**.

APPLYING THE 1-2-3 OF COMMUNICATION

1 **Desired impact** (what specific outcome do you want this communication to have?)

Your 3 key messages

3

Facts about your audience (in relation to the outcome/impact you want to have)

2

Presentation Structure

Headline

Strapline

Key messages

1

2

3

Call to action

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The five types of headline

1   The Question

e.g. 'When there is so much to say, how do you choose what's important?'

Your example:

2   The Controversial Statement

e.g. 'You have been wasting communication opportunities all your life'

Your example:

3   The Metaphor

e.g. 'A communication without purpose is like a ship without a destination'

Your example:

4   The Teaser

e.g. 'I'm going to reveal the secret to effective communication'

Your example:

5   The Striking Statistic

e.g. '33% of employers say they would avoid hiring a woman of childbearing age *(www.pregnantthenscrewed.com)*'

Your example:

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Undermining Language

Using shrinkers: "just" "actually" and "almost" This is when we attempt to make ourselves smaller to take up less space or reduce the impact for fear of the response. When you have a question, you might feel the need to reassure the listener the question has no aggressive intentions. But 'just curious' diminishes our real thoughtful reason for asking.

Unnecessary apologies: "Sorry to bother you but," "Sorry if this is a silly question…" A great feminine strength is the ability to apologise but this is when we take it too far and are apologetic for existing, for taking up space, for having an opinion. There's nothing wrong with apologising when you have a regret but apologising for talking can become self-diminishing habit for some.

Implying you are not coherent: "Does that make sense?" "Am I making sense?" or "Do you know what I mean?" Generally these are used when you are trying to ensure your audience has understood your point which is a great intention and shouldn't be dismissed, but you can find out if they have questions without implying you haven't expressed yourself well.

Say instead: "Is everyone clear what they need to do?" "I look forward to hearing your thoughts" or "Let me know if you have questions about this."

Undermining qualifiers: "I'm just thinking off the top of my head, but…", "I'm no expert in this, but…", or "You clearly know more about this than I do but…" We do this because of our conditioning to be ever humble, or perhaps our thinking IS in process. Delete the qualifier and just say what you have to say.

Say instead: "How did that land with you?" "What are your questions/thoughts?"

Hiding your point of view behind a question: "Does everyone feel sure about this direction?". Sure, sometimes, we use questions instead of statements for strategic reasons – to be diplomatic or non-threatening, but more often we do so because we are afraid to take a stand or are afraid of being seen as unlikeable if we rock the boat. By all means use questions as replacements for more explicit statements when it's strategic – but not as a way of hiding your ideas.

Say instead: "I'd like to give this more thought" " I don't agree with this direction"

Fillers: "Sort of", "like", "Umm", "kinda", etc… Perhaps the most common verbal tic we encounter. These can be some of the most unconscious undermining language habits but taking the time to become conscious of them will be worth the effort and improve your credibility.

Delivering with impact – 3 top tips

1 Think about your language:

Avoid jargon and abstractions as much as possible. Paint memorable pictures with descriptive language and metaphors. Use personal stories to bring your content to life and help people to relate, thus creating empathy. Use numbers and statistics to make a powerful case. Instead of long meandering sentences, speak in bite-sized chunks of no more than a dozen words.

2 Use your body:

Take into account the environment you are in and use the space wisely. Consider sight lines, avoid hiding behind tables and flipcharts and use props thoughtfully and effectively. Don't be afraid to move about the space, this will help to engage the audience and keep their attention while conveying that you have the confidence to own to it.

If you are naturally expressive, work with this to enhance your language. If, however this is not the case, calm and stillness can also be very effective to draw the audience in. If you feel comfortable your audience will be at ease and thus more receptive to your messages.

Be aware of your posture and the non verbal messages that you convey, for example, standing with your legs crossed could be interpreted as childlike or defensive. Instead stand tall and strong with poise.

3 Use your voice:

Warm up your vocal cords and your facial muscles before you speak. This will make you far less likely to get tongue tied and you will have better projection and diction.

Speaking slowly and pausing gives people time to digest what you've said – particularly if it's new or complex information. Make eye contact as you deliver each section, make each audience member feel as though you are speaking to them as individuals.

Consider your tone and pitch, vary this to bring the words to life. There is nothing worse than someone speaking in monotone. Really think about the meaning of what you are saying and where to put the emphasis.

Get feedback about all of this – and work on areas for development.

Difficult feedback scenario worksheet

1   Who do you want to give the feedback to? (e.g. line manager, team member etc)

2   What is the feedback you want to give them?

3   In a nutshell, is the feedback about their performance or their behaviour?

4   What are your feelings about this situation?

Pre-requisites for giving difficult feedback

1 Be clear about the outcome you want:

Pause for a few moments and think about the best outcome you could possibly have in this situation…. Now think again and aim even higher! If you started out thinking you just want the other person to be **aware** of the impact they are having on others….. wouldn't you actually like them to have a **positive** outcome on others?

Focusing on what you **want** rather than on what you **don't like** gives the conversation a positive focus and will help keep the discussion on track.

2 Be genuinely curious:

We tend to assume that our picture of reality is full and accurate, and our feedback is often a one-sided monologue! We may be missing important pieces of the picture… Be genuinely curious about what is actually going on for the other person. Ask real questions!

3 Assume goodwill:

Finally, our attitude towards the person and the situation will leak into the feedback. If we are feeling irritated, put-upon, frustrated, disrespected, etc, these feelings will come through our feedback, however much we try to script it. (Or perhaps because we try to script it, it will come over as impersonal or inauthentic.)

Do not give the feedback until you are able to assume goodwill on the part of the other person. They may well be trying to do their best, be unaware of the impact of their behaviour on others, or be unclear about what outputs or standards are expected from them.

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A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR GIVING DIFFICULT FEEDBACK

Step 1: Agreeing what you both want

- Describe clearly and objectively what you want
- Ask if the other person agrees and discuss any points of disagreement

Once you have reached a shared agreement, you can move to **step 2**...

Step 2: Agreement about the actual situation

- Describe the objective current situation in relation to this. Be specific and factual – have relevant instances or examples
- Ask open questions to find out what's going on for the other person

When you have reached a shared agreement, you can move to **step 3**...

Step 2: Collaborate on the way forward

- Work together on the solution
- Agree who will do what
- Decide when and how you'll review

Remember to focus on the outcome you want, assume goodwill on the part of the other person and be genuinely curious – there are two sides to every story!

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Giving difficult feedback practice – Working in trios

Spend no more than 3 minutes deciding whose scenario you want to real-play. This person is the **feedback giver**. Allocate the other two roles: **feedback receiver** (responds to the feedback as they would in real life) and **observer** (notes how the feedback giver is using the tips and structure and can interject, if helpful).

1 Spend a few (5-10) minutes with the **feedback giver** doing her best to put the suggested Giving Difficult Feedback process into practice. After 5-10 minutes each describes their experience/observations.

2 Staying with the same scenario, as soon as you get stuck or someone has a suggestion – move roles, as outlined below. After 5-10 minutes each describes their experience/observations.

3 Staying with the same scenario, move round once more so the original **feedback giver** now observes her scenario. After 5 minutes or so each describes her experience/observations.

Optional (if there is time)

This time everyone goes back to their original roles (as in 1.), so that the original **feedback giver** has the chance to take all their new learning on board and put everything into practice to have the most positive possible outcome, then have a final review of how it went.

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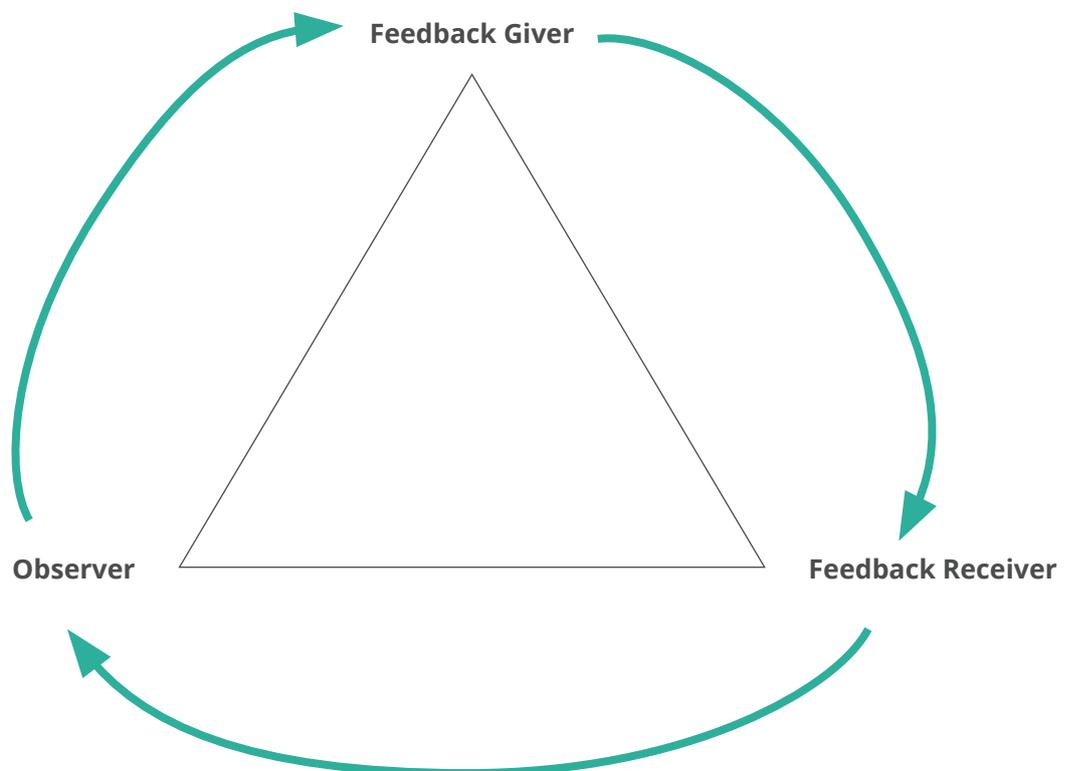
Hot Topic
Module 5

At Module 5 you will be looking at how to position yourself for success.

In this module you will:

• refresh your career goals and milestones

• receive feedback from your peers about your skills, talents and positive attributes

• develop and practice your 1-minute elevator pitch

• consider who needs to know what you want and what you have to offer

• how you will remain resilient

For your final Hot Topic all Peer Groups will be working just within their own smaller group delivering a short elevator pitch style presentation to a significant person in your future career.

You should organise the following event for the self-directed M5 day:

• invite one person each (line manager/counter-signing manager/person influential in your career)

• set up a virtual meeting (Zoom/Teams/platform of your choice)

• decide on the timing and duration (we suggest booking an hour in the afternoon)

Think about sharing what have been the key learnings from the programme/what has changed in your thinking during the last year and then deliver your elevator pitch. Think about the structure, what you want your audience to take away/do as a result of your presentation.

We also suggest you build in a session following each elevator pitch to invite ideas from your audience regarding how you might progress your career journey and how the people in the room can help you achieve your career goals (starting with your own invitee).

The Thresholds team see tremendous progress from participants over the duration of the programme. This session is designed to give you an opportunity to practice everything you've learned from the modules and create a space for influential people in your work life to see your progress, create opportunities to exploit your potential and continue to invest in your future development.