Creating impactful messages – 3 top tips

Every time you communicate...

1. Think about the result you want
When you speak – at a meeting, in a presentation, in a 1-1 setting – it's really important to know what you want to achieve. Choose something tangible.

People often say things like they want people to understand such and such or give people information about such and such… but don’t really consider what action they want people to take as a result. Even something like ‘get buy-in’ is pretty vague.

Set yourself a measurable goal for the impact you want each communication to have, that you can test by getting feedback – and hold yourself to account for achieving your desired result.

2. Know your audience!
Be curious! What do you know about the person or people you are communicating with? What do they care about? What are their concerns and anxieties? How much knowledge do they already have? If you want them to take action, what influence or authority do they have? You might need to do some research in order to fill the gaps in your knowledge about your audience.

Notice negative assumptions. People often have negative opinions about the people they are going to be speaking to – imagining they might be hostile to their ideas or ask challenging questions or think badly of them in some way. This is often a reflection of their insecurity or lack of confidence. These assumptions can affect your messages – which can become defensive or pre-emptive as they prepare psychologically for an adversarial encounter. They arm themselves with facts like a suit of armour! Assume goodwill instead. These people want to make the world a better place! So they need to know what it is you have to tell them.

Practise empathy. Connect with people’s interests. Address their real concerns and needs. Relate to them as people. Share your passion!

3. Make your messages clear and straightforward!
Give your audience useful information upon which to act effectively. To the extent that you’re clear about your desired outcome and have researched your audience, your messages will just naturally be clearer.

Remember - your communication is a gift you are giving to your audience. Just like you, they want to make the world a better place. Don’t beat about the bush or shy away from tough messages.

Keep it simple! If you’re in a 1-1 setting check out what the other person has understood.