Hold business meetings effectively with these tips

IN SUMMARY

• Rudderless conferencing not only takes toll on attendees but also serves no purpose to boost bottom line.

Thursday morning and 9am rolled around. Employees drudgingly filed into the main conference room. Juma, CEO of an agricultural seed company, arrived at 9:05am and proceeded to commence the meeting.

He started off with a long story about a meeting he held earlier in the week at the Nairobi Club. He went into tremendous detail about all the important people he met at the meeting.

Finally 10am hit and Juma ended the meeting as the employees eagerly darted out of the conference room for the emotional sanctity of their work stations.

Employees uniformly feel that the weekly all-staff meeting represents a colossal waste of time and mental energy with no purpose.

Does the above scenario resonate with you in your own workplace? Have you ever sat through business meetings whereby participants ramble on and on and never get to a concise point? On the flip side, do your own colleagues find that you ramble on?

You clearly should desire to strike a balance between polite back and forth banter that builds the personal relationships between you and your colleagues, bosses, and customers.

But you also need to display very direct, confident, and targeted verbiage when it comes to pitching your core ideas. The more words you utilise to communicate your core business goals, the less people remain interested and they feel you do not really have your priorities in order.

When engaging in verbal communications, exploit your awareness of the five-step oral message sending process.

First, develop rapport with your listeners. Kenyans develop rapport well and do so better than those from most other cultures.

Building rapport includes small talk back and forth between you and the listener. If your audience represents multiple listeners, then ask collective questions, such as “how is everyone doing” and “what does everyone think about the point I just made” or “any additional thoughts or comments”? Bring them into your dialogue. Do not make it top down. You must remain aware of their interest levels in what you discuss.

Second, state your communication objective clearly and concisely. As Kenyans we often lack verbal clarity when stating our communication objectives efficiently.
How many of your colleagues take long to tell you their main point in talking to you because they harbour fear about your response?

Professionals across the industry spectrum cannot tolerate individuals who fail to state intentions clearly and swiftly.

Third, go ahead and transmit your message. When broadcasting your message, remember that transmission contains three components: posture, tone of voice, and words.

Research shows that up to 55 per cent of verbal communication actually entails your body posture. If your listener perceives your posture as confident, then they psychologically paint you mentally as a confident and capable person. Inasmuch, they receive your message more positively.

How do you portray confidence? Make sure your shoulders do not slouch. Stand straight. Do not hold your hands and arms in a way that makes your shoulders bend.

Also, ensure that your wrists do not bend during your discussion or presentation. Bended wrists for me or women represent a psychological sign of weakness.

Then 38 per cent of communication involves the tone of voice. Think about your daily activities. If throughout the day any single person, whether a colleague, boss, or client, asks you to repeat yourself because they could not hear you, then you failed for the day and should return your salary.

Failure to adequately judge the distance between yourself and other listeners and project an adequate volume in your voice represents a crucial failure in the minds of professionals right here in Kenya and around the world.

Then only the remaining seven per cent of verbal communication comprises the actual words that you speak.

Fourth, make sure you gauge your listener’s understanding of your message.

Do not ask simple questions such as: “did you understand?” Such yes or no responses from your listeners do not reflect their true understanding. Give open-ended options, like: “what do you think of my suggestion?” Then actually respond to their statement with follow-up.

Fifth, obtain a commitment from your listener and continuation timeframes. If your listener does not commit and you two do not agree to a deliverable timeframe, then nothing further will likely occur following your message.

In Kenya, we often feel rude to request such follow-up. But, as businesspeople, we must ensure efficiency and business operations. You did not speak with the colleague, supplier, customer, or investor for your own personal enjoyment.

You held a specific objective in initiating the communication in the first place. Inasmuch, do not let the objective go to waste by neglecting to pursue follow-up.

In summary, focus on developing your own personal communication strategy. Ensure that you employ the deep nuances of verbal communication effectively and completely.

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