

## October 2009 – Power of Positive Communications

In 1938, Chester Barnard wrote that the first executive function in an organization is to establish and maintain systematic, effective communications (Barnard, 216). In 2009, Bob Behn at Harvard has even noticed that, in this economic downturn, downsized organizations are renting out spare office space at cost just to have a creative energy, a real "buzz" in the work space; people communicating, working together up close and personal. So, managers are looking to fill their work space with communications energy even if multiple purposes and customers are involved. (Behn)

Noisy energy works better than silence and a group of persons working together in a communicating, cooperative enterprise can produce even more than each individual working alone. People, groups, formal organizations all have communications signatures or profiles like every 19<sup>th</sup> century telegraph operator's "fist," the combination of rhythm, habits, and actions that created a unique identifier for each telegraph key operator. A critical issue is to make sure that your and your organization's communications "fist" is positive.

Maintaining a positive environment has to be deliberate, on purpose, worked at. In a marriage or partnership, one negative comment can outweigh five positive comments (Gladwell, 26). The most common negative statements and questions show criticism and contempt and are responded to with defensiveness and stonewalling (Gladwell, 32). Everyone in the workforce can increase positive communications by "priming" the organization's communications processes for success (Gladwell, 52). We can choose the power of nice instead of patronizing contempt, condescension, or criticism.

1. Flash a smile. It sets a positive tone for you and for everyone looking at you. See yourself in their eyes. (Thaler, 34)
2. Tickle their funny bone. You may have to practice if you have not laughed a lot in a long time. (Thaler, 32)
3. Start with the positive and set a positive goal and strategy before working on areas needing improvement.
4. Assume "yes." Act like the information provided you is correct and then build or bridge to a question or the next piece of information you want or need.
5. Ask people "what do you think?" or "how do you think that will work?" or "describe how that might work" instead of always telling them what you absolutely know for sure. (Thaler, 93)
6. Tell the truth about an event or action; faking it just does not make it. (Thaler, 62)
7. Don't be afraid to set some boundaries while moving forward toward the positive goal you have set. (Thaler, 72-73)

Try a "nice power" experiment. Pick an important task and coach someone to succeed brilliantly in it. Be the best supporting actor when they get the Oscar for best picture and best actor. You make a bigger pie for everyone by helping other people get their slice, pooling resources, and sharing the credit. (Thaler, 16-28)

Take advantage of a learning opportunity everyday. Smile at somebody and see what happens. Go to the [Guide to Learning & Development](#) on our website and be sure to make use of our [Training Consultants](#) to help you on your learning and development path to success.

*(References cited above)*

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- Of course, one can probably find new and/or used copies at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), also.