



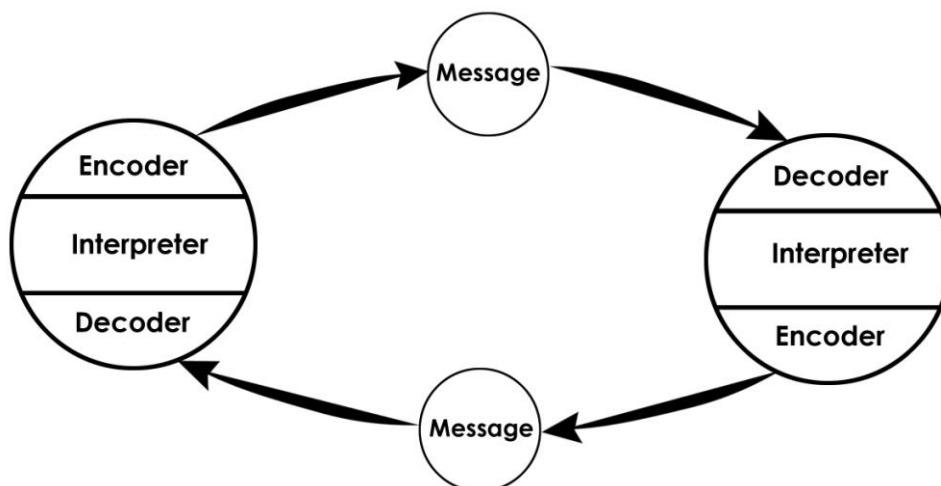
## Communication is an art!

The art of communication is the ability to send a message to someone else and have it received as you intended.

Most of us get through life able to string a sentence together, write an email and tell others what we need to – but how many of us find that, at some time or another, what we thought we said wasn't what others heard?

### Communication explained

Osgood and Schramm's circular model of communication (1954) (below) goes some way to explaining the way that we communicate. It isn't a linear process, nor is there a beginning or end – we communicate continually, consciously and unconsciously responding to the responses that others give us from our communication by way of feedback.



You give out messages (encode); the other person receives your messages (decode), interprets them and responds accordingly, giving out new messages (encode), which you in turn receive, interpret and respond to (decode).

Messages can be verbal, non-verbal, written, conscious, unconscious and more. They can also be affected by "noise" distortion, which could literally be a

*"The art of communication is the language of leadership."*  
**James Humes**  
 US author and presidential speech writer.

*"You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere."*  
**Lee Iacocca**  
 Former CEO  
 Chrysler Corporation

passing train if you're on the phone on a platform or missing words in a text message. Add to this the individual's personal perceptions, cultural background and past experiences that affect how they interpret the message and it is little wonder that the opportunities for miscommunication are so great!



Changes in both technology and the world in which we live mean it is no longer enough to be able to walk the talk or even talk the walk! We need to look and sound competent using all the technology that we have at hand and, indeed, to know when we should use what, to be most effective!

Communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is so much more than it was – and we have to do so much more of it than we did.

### **We all have to be able to communicate**

To get on in life, even those of us who are employed to sit at a desk and crunch numbers need to be able to influence others, build a network of contacts and explain our thoughts, our processes and instructions to others. There is no role nowadays where you don't need to be a good communicator and, on top of this, you need to be able to communicate with confidence in a multitude of ways – face-to-face, over the phone, in writing, on teleconferences, on-line, one-to-one and in groups or even crowds.

To make matters even more complicated, everyone prefers to communicate in different ways using different technologies. As someone who likes to be with other people, I prefer to deal with them face to face and find the telephone a difficult tool to use effectively. My teenage daughters, on the other hand, will always opt for an on-line chat or text as their first choice of communication tool.

On top of all of this, our behaviour – whatever the method of communication – may not be perceived as it was intended. Just as on email and text, so many people now resort to using a smiley face to denote that they are joking, we could sometimes use that technique in face-to-face communication! However, it is a truism that one man's joke is another man's insult.

It is worth remembering the words of US self-help author and coach Anthony Robbins: "To effectively communicate, we must realise that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others."

Effective communication is the start and end of good business and good relationships. In 30 years in business I can't think of a single problem or issue that I've come across that wasn't caused by poor communication. Some of these issues had been going on for so long it was hard to identify the source but, without exception, they all boiled down to a message not being "encoded" well or not being "decoded" as intended!



*"The more elaborate our means of communication, the less we communicate."*

**Joseph Priestley**

*"Communicate unto the other person that which you would want him to communicate unto you if your positions were reversed."*

**Aaron Goldman**

*"When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic but creatures of emotion."*

**Dale Carnegie**

## Good or bad communication is episodic

That's not to say we can all be defined as "good" or "bad" communicators. Most of us do just fine most of the time; like behaviour, it's episodic. In certain situations, with certain people and with certain technology, we communicate better or worse. For some of us it's when we stand in front of an audience to do a presentation while for others it's walking into a room full of strangers, negotiating one on one, or working in a team of people you don't know or like, or when you are the most senior/junior in the room.

None of us are born good communicators: environment, personality, upbringing, cultural background, experiences and relationships – plus a hefty dose of genetics – all contribute to create the individual we are. And these define what we are good at and comfortable with (or not), including how effectively we communicate.



However, as babies, we all learn to communicate pretty effectively before we can even talk. Babies gurgle their contentedness, grizzle to show they are uncomfortable and produce a series of very different cries when tired, wet, ignored or hungry. Parents learn quite rapidly what each of those cries mean, enabling them to react to each one in the right way.

Children then absorb the language around them, learning their mother tongue almost by osmosis, and through their early years become increasingly effective communicators. Along the way they also pick up non-verbal techniques – ignoring requests they don't want to undertake, throwing a tantrum when they cannot express themselves effectively and learning the power of a winning smile or hug. Children are normally very instinctual communicators – they show their emotions clearly and are usually quite transparent, even when trying to be manipulative!

Your early environment has a significant impact on how you will behave in adult life. If, as a child, our views are not listened to, then we are unlikely to be very vocal or confident as adults. Equally, if we were included in family conversations and decisions, we are more likely to be confident and relaxed in voicing our opinion in a range of situations.

## The effect of past experiences are far reaching

Our environment and past experiences can also have a long-term impact on the effectiveness of our communication in certain situations.

One client years ago told me how her fear of presenting started after she heard a throw away comment by a church-goer after she had read the lesson that day. The comment was probably forgotten by the "encoder" the moment it was uttered, but the way my client had "decoded" the message had affected her life from that day onwards.

My client wasn't able to give feedback to close that loop, so the "encoder" never knew how the words had been received and perceived. It's entirely feasible that he hadn't meant anything derogatory in the first place, but perception is all and the impact was great.

*"There is in every child a painstaking teacher, so skilful that he obtains identical results in all children in all parts of the world. The only language men ever speak perfectly is the one they learn in babyhood, when no one can teach them anything!"*

**Maria Montessori**

*"The basic building block of good communications is the feeling that every human being is unique and of value."*

**Unknown**

Author Rudyard Kipling said that words are the most powerful drug used by mankind. There is more to communication than words, but remembering their power is a good start!

As we grow older, the weight of our experiences, background and culture come out and, as well as impacting on our choice of communication skill, we use this knowledge to temper our behaviour to fit the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Behind this adaptability, lies our preferred behaviour style; this is what we use when we are either very comfortable in our surroundings or under stress. And our preferred behaviour style is very apparent in the way in which we communicate.

Luckily there are tools to help us identify those behaviours and communication styles. Having a greater understanding of what makes us tick helps us to communicate better with others: if we understand how we are likely to react in various situations – and we can begin to understand similar (or dissimilar) traits in others – then we can change the ways in which we communicate for better results.

One of the best tools for this job, I believe, is PRISM Brain Mapping, the world's most comprehensive neuroscience-based behaviour profiling instrument and you get the chance to see how effective this is in Activities 3 and 4 of Module 1.

### **It's not just experiences that we have to take into account**

As we have discovered, we are all moulded by our background, experiences, culture and upbringing; this means the messages we receive go through a mental filter or mindset that has been forged by this background of ours.



Unless we try to understand the mindset of people we are interacting with, our communication will be imperfect and ineffective.

There is a real art to correctly interpreting other people and it has as much to do with listening as it does with speaking. Your communication is also at risk of being de-railed if you don't correctly understand the other person's perceptions or let some of the many barriers to effective communication get in the way.

When I talk about barriers these could be:

- Using email when it would be better to get up and talk to your colleague face to face
- Phoning from a busy train surrounded by fascinated strangers to have that "difficult conversation" with your supplier
- Choosing to use words that your audience may not understand with lots of jargon and technical vocabulary
- Writing a document for an imagined audience rather than who is actually going to read it
- Saying one thing verbally while your body language says something different
- Not being open, flexible and transparent and thus causing misunderstandings.

*"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said,"*

**Peter Drucker,**  
US writer and educator.

*"The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives,"*

**Anthony Robbins,**  
US self-help author and coach

The list is endless. There is no doubt that there is a lot to think about but, as I said earlier, most of us communicate very effectively most of the time. And for those situations and types of communication where you're not as effective as you could be ... that's when the skills of our Lemon Club partners come in!

The purpose of The Lemon Club is to provide tips and techniques that you can use in everyday life to fine tune and hone your current skills as well as providing you with new ones. Why run it as a monthly membership programme? Because everything that we do gets better with practice.

In the words of US author and speaker Jim Rohn: "Take advantage of every opportunity to practice your communication skills so that when important occasions arise, you will have the gift, the style, the sharpness, the clarity and the emotions to affect other people."



This is just the start of your communication journey with The Lemon Club and our programme will provide you with a host of skills, tips and techniques through which to learn and improve the art of communication.

For now let's give the final word to American TV host Brian Tracy, who says: "Communication is a skill that you can learn. It's like riding a bicycle or typing. If you are willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life."

*By Sally Hindmarch and Sue Carey  
The Lemon Club*

*"Communication  
works for those  
who work at it,"  
John Powell*