

## Adjust Your Communication Style

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Frequently, we will be in situations with people who require us to adjust our style of interaction. I was helping “Mickey” in a local homeowners association. Mickey was a litigating attorney accustomed to tough courtroom battles. Unfortunately he brought the same style into our neighborhood meetings. I commented about his harsh approach by reminding him that we were working with friends and neighbors not opposing legal counsel. His response was, “It’s just business.”

It may have been “just business” to him, but creating contention with neighbors was not the way to get the cooperation to get work done nor did it win him any friends.

Paul provided an example, “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:22b, NIV) Paul understood that in different circumstances we need to adapt rather than plunge ahead in our own way.

For example, some individuals process information more slowly. In these circumstances we adjust our communication style by slowing down. In other occasions we may work with somebody who processes information very quickly and doesn’t want the exchange to go slow. Clearly in each of these cases you need to adjust your style of communicating.

A few weeks ago I had a telephone appointment to make a presentation to a potential client. I prepared in advance to speak about 20 minutes followed by time for questions. I delegated about an hour for the meeting. When I made my phone call, I was told that five people in the conference room would give me eight minutes to make a presentation and then they would get back to me to tell me if I made their final list to pursue a longer presentation. I would’ve preferred more time to go over my concept more thoroughly, but I didn’t have a choice except to adjust my presentation to my clients’ requested. The good part was that I made the final cut.

When I lived in Detroit I played some ice hockey in an arena owned by Ted Lindsay, a former Detroit Red Wing Hockey Hall Fame Member who, for a short period of time, coached the Detroit Red Wings’ hockey team. I also watched him coach some youth hockey with kids aged 6-7 all the way up to 15-18 years old. I could see he adjusted his coaching style significantly for each group. Ted understood what each group needed.

I adjust my style when I leave voicemail. If someone speaks quickly in their recorded message, I try to match their speed and cadence. However, when somebody speaks slower; I slow down.

Adjust your communication style for individual differences. When you do, you will be more effective at connecting with others.

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