



Robert T. Groom
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President's Corner

Make It a New Year's Resolution: Be a Better Communicator

As we entered the year 1999, many of us made New Year's resolutions. I would like to suggest one more that has benefits for everyone with whom you interact. More importantly, it benefits you, and it's one of my personal goals for this New Year. The goal is "being a better communicator."

As I reflect over the last year and analyze the successes and disappointments associated with all aspects of my life, one thing that is almost always pertinent to the disappointments is a lack of, or breakdown in, communication.

It is hard to believe that with e-mail, voice mail, FAX machines, website chat lines and telephones that anyone would have a problem communicating with someone else, but we do. In many cases, these methods help to create the problem. When we communicate without talking directly to another person, we assume that person got the message. To ensure that they did, we should go an extra step to confirm that the communication was received.

When setting up a business meeting, an agenda should be sent ahead of time for review by other interested

parties prior to the meeting. This gives everyone time to properly prepare, and helps all parties to realize the scope of the meeting.

Every meeting should contain a review of the agreements reached so that everyone leaves with the same understanding. Minutes or a letter outlining the results should be sent as a permanent record, when appropriate, because it's hard to remember everything that happened months before. Time tables should be mutually set and reviewed periodically.

Even when we talk directly to each other, our interpretations may be different. It is important to confirm verbal agreements in writing.

Be proactive, rather than reactive. If someone who is supposed to contact you does not, call them. All of us have demands on our time, and we all can fall behind or forget commitments.

"Phone tag" is a problem for most of us. Something that I'm going to try with my voice mail is to ask for the best time to return a call to try to avoid this problem.

I hope you will try my New Year's resolution and join me in trying to be a better communicator. I wish you all a happy, healthy and successful New Year. **P&SF**

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