Getting Your Point Across

Concentrate less on what you want to say and more on what you want them to hear.

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When we're trying to get a point across to someone else we often think long and hard about what we want to say. That is the wrong way to go about it. Instead of focusing on what you want to say to get your point across, you should focus on what you want the other person to hear.

What Do I Want to Say?
Whether you are giving instructions to an employee, ordering food at a drive-through, or writing a memo explaining the new dress code you want to be sure to get your point across. You want to say just the right thing so the other person understands your point. Sometimes you practice what you are going to say. Often we write drafts of our memos and speeches to make sure we use the right words. All this is done to make sure we send the right message.

Countless books and articles have been written that explain why sending the right message is so important and teach you how to send exactly the message you want to send. Their authors stress the importance of being concise, precise, and specific in choosing your words, regardless of whether you write them or speak them. They tell you that this is the best way to get your point across to your audience.

Who Is My Audience?
We all know how important our audience is in deciding what we are going to say and how we are going to say it. Explaining the value of a new phone system is different if you are speaking to the finance department than if you are addressing the telesales staff. The better you know your audience the easier it is for you to tailor your message to them. The more your message is tailored to your audience the more likely it is that you will get your point across.

How Do I Reach Them?
While the message you send is important, the message the receiver hears is even more important. If you know your audience you usually have an idea of how they will interpret or filter what you say. You can use this to your advantage to make sure they receive the message you are trying to send.

We all know, for instance, that if we are addressing a group of first-graders we can't use "big words" because they won't get it. They won't understand our message. So we choose words they will understand. Rather than using "big words" that convey the message we want to send, we use words we think they will understand. That way they will hear our message and understand it.

Don't try to explain technology concepts to accountants using technical terms. Don't use a financial analogy to get a point across to the Creative Department. If you want your service department to handle more calls per day, tell them that. Don't tell them they need to "reduce the time interval between customer-interface opportunities."
**Manage This Issue**
To increase your chances of getting your point across, focus more on the receiver than on the sender. Tailor your message to your audience to improve their comprehension. Don't worry so much about what you want to say as about what you want them to hear and understand.