

Communicating with **NANCY STERN**

COMMUNICATION PLUS

Inside this issue:

Maximize Meeting Results	2
Now What?	2
Q & A	3
Stern in Action	3
Why Nancy Stern?	4
Program/Training Topics	4
Contact Information	4

*"Wherever
You Go,
There You Are."*

—Anonymous

Letting Go of Things You Cannot Control

Malcolm Gladwell wrote the books *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*. The subtitle for *Blink* is *The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. On the book jacket it says, "a book about choices that seem to be made in an instant—in the blink of an eye."

I read this book and found it fascinating. It got me thinking about the choices we make. How conscious are they? Does intuition factor in? Can we even pay attention to intuition if we're not fully aware and consciously present moment to moment? Or, is that "blink of an eye" simply to be trusted at all times? I have come to discover how important it is to use all the tools available for decision making.

Conscious choice, intuition and letting go are three of the tools that can help us make better decisions and live with less stress. Ask yourself are you holding on to things you cannot control? Are you getting signals from within that these things are not serv-



Having fun while letting go at the end of a session with Nancy

ing you well? Are you clinging to old thought patterns or negative self-talk? What about holding on to toxic people in your life, or workplace issues that never seem to get resolved? Maybe it's time to let go of those things you can't control. Remember all you really have control of is yourself.

For example, at the beginning of a meeting, a training session or a conference call, take a piece of paper and write down all the things you're thinking about that you can't do anything about right now. Then throw it away. Enjoy the moment. Why worry about what you can't do anything about now?

On a bigger scale, determine two or three things in your life you could change but for some reason you haven't made any changes yet. Write those things (or negative thoughts) on a little piece of paper and then roll the paper up and put it into a balloon. Blow up the balloon and then release it. In the blink of an eye, the negative "stuff" in your life is gone and for a moment, you'll feel relieved. Now, take that relief and integrate it into your life moment to moment, from one choice to another. Make conscious choices. Let go of things you cannot control and put your energy into what you can control—you!

Maximize Meeting Results

Meetings have been called the biggest time waster in the workplace. Bad meetings waste more than time; they waste money. Fortunately, people can learn new ideas that lead to more effective meeting management. Take the following assessment to discover what you have to learn about effective meetings.

For each of the statements below, circle **T** or **F**

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Effective meetings start and end on time. | T F |
| 2. A meeting agenda should be given to everyone who is expected to attend a meeting. | T F |
| 3. Meeting Agendas should go out in advance of the meeting. | T F |
| 4. People listed on the agenda should be prepared for their topics. | T F |
| 5. Computer software is available to help with meeting management. | T F |
| 6. There are alternatives to many meetings. | T F |
| 7. For a meeting to be effective it must last a minimum of 30 minutes. | T F |
| 8. When a meeting goes over the scheduled time, people are free to leave. | T F |
| 9. A meeting is simply a time when people get together to sit and talk. | T F |
| 10. It doesn't matter who attends a meeting as long as the team is well represented. | T F |
| 11. A good time to have a meeting is after lunch. | T F |
| 12. Visual aids are for training, not for meetings. | T F |

Now What?

Items 1-6 are true and 7-12 are false. You may have correctly answered every item but knowing what to do and making it happen are two different things. Your challenge is to find a way to make the needed changes in meetings where you work.

Consider these issues:

1. What must happen before people take meeting management more seriously?
2. How can you use technology to make meetings more effective?
3. What are some effective ways to get people back on track? Which would you be willing to use at your next meeting?
4. When a meeting is over people leave. What else should they do?
5. It has been said, "Meetings never get better because people keep doing the same things over and over." What is one suggestion you have to put a stop to this tendency?
6. Why is having a designated facilitator important for maximizing meeting results?
7. How can you be a better meeting leader or participant?

Meetings are indispensable when you don't want to do anything.

—John K. Galbraith

Email Your Questions to Nancy@nancystern.com

Q *With all the changes going on lately, we've had several meetings and it seems the more meetings we have, the less prepared we are for them. What can I do to better prepare all of us (myself and my employees) so we have more productive, meaningful meetings?*

A

First be sure a meeting is the best medium for conveying your message. Think about it like this: If the content is highly personal and complex, then a face-to-face gathering is best. If, on the other hand, the message is simple and impersonal, then email, a memo or a voice message would suffice.

Once you have determined a meeting is definitely needed, get real clear about your purpose, objectives and criteria for success. If the objective is to identify those meetings that can either be eliminated or reduced in frequency, the purpose might be to plan and problem-solve, and the criteria for the success of that meeting could be:

- *At the end of the meeting, we have an action plan and a revised meeting schedule.*

Next, create a meaningful meeting announcement and be sure to include the following:

- Meeting Logistics (date, time, location, duration)
- Meeting objectives and criteria for success
- Participant Preparation (state what people need to bring to the meeting i.e. ideas, solutions, rationale, etc.)
- Attendees and assigned roles. If you are the leader of the meeting, it is best to have someone else take on the role of facilitator, the person who keeps you all on track. Also, be sure to have another person taking notes. The more people you can get involved in the meeting, the better it will be for bringing ideas together.
- Determine the methodology you'll use and then set time limits for each agenda item.

Distribute the announcement at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting so people have time to prepare. More time than that may be needed depending on the objective and purpose of the meeting.

Now you're ready to meet. Remember to stay focused on the objectives and the criteria for success.

"A good life is a series of joyful meetings and joyful moments"

—Francis Bacon



Nancy conducts a session with members of the USDA Forest Service during a conference in Sacramento California.

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Because how you say what you say, matters.™

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Whether you're experiencing change, managing people, connecting with customers and co-workers, or making presentations, getting your message across effectively is vital to your success.

Nancy Stern custom designs keynotes, breakouts and educational programs to enhance communication effectiveness; to help increase productivity, profitability and peace of mind; and to impact the bottom line where it matters most—with results.

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- How You Say What You Say Matters™
- Leadership Dynamics™
- Connecting with Customers™
- Powerful Presentations
- Facilitate to Motivate and Manage Conflict™
- Maximize Meeting Results™
- You Can't Leave Home Without You™
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- Shift Happens: Managing the Dynamics of Change
- Team Building for Productivity
- Generations Jive: Intergenerational Communication Tips™
- Should You Stay or Should You Grow? Reaping the Rewards of Risk-Taking™

Why Nancy Stern?

Nancy Stern, MA is the president/owner and senior consultant of Communication Plus, a consulting firm in San Diego specializing in leadership and employee development. Since 1972, she has taught thousands the art and science of effective communication. She is a former columnist with the *San Diego Daily Transcript* and has taught at the University of California San Diego and San Diego State University Management Development Center.

She inspires managers, employees and individuals of all ages through the

simple, yet powerful, lesson that *how you say what you say, matters™*. Personal experiences form the foundation of her programs, creating presentations that are personal, professional and practical. The result: Improvement of the "whole person" and therefore, the "whole organization."

She is an EMMY award-winner, who produced and appeared in the national PBS television series *Communicating With Nancy Stern* (1990-95) and she is the coauthor of *101 Stupid Things Trainers Do To Sabotage Success*.

Nancy holds a Master of Arts degree in Communication Education from Michigan State University and is a member of the American Society for Training and Development and the National Speakers Association.



Nancy Stern