

Communicating with **NANCY STERN**

COMMUNICATION PLUS

How Rude!

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Aggravating Circumstances, a recent survey funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, looks at what Americans are thinking about courtesy, manners, rudeness and respect.

According to their findings, not only do eight in ten Americans say a lack of respect and courtesy is a serious problem, but six in ten say things have become worse in recent years. A surprising 41 percent admit that they're part of the problem and sometimes behave badly themselves.

Additionally the survey says Americans feel the way they are treated by business and customer service employees is frequently exasperating, and sometimes even insulting. Too many workers, they complain, are careless, apathetic and unhelpful. Almost half of those surveyed say that they have walked out of a business specifically because of bad service.

So what does all this mean for you and me? I'll tell you this much, I agree 100% with the results of this survey. Most of my clients are courteous and respectful but there are a few who will not return phone calls or respond to email even if they have initiated the conversation regarding a training program or speaking event. As someone who makes my living studying human behavior and helping people communicate more effectively, this

Those Surveyed Said...

...lack of respect and courtesy is a serious problem.



...they often or sometimes come across people who are rude or disrespectful.



...they themselves have behaved this way in the past.



Source: Public Agenda/AP

“Rudeness is the weak man’s imitation of strength, and luxuriates in the absence of self-respect.”

- Eric Hoffer

not only angers me, it also causes me to wonder how anyone gets anything done.

Here’s one of many examples I hear from people. A colleague had a long time client call her last Spring to ask if she would create a training program for his company. She emailed him a proposal and he emailed back that he liked it. He even asked her when her schedule would allow her to come to deliver the program and she responded by asking him when he wanted it. She didn’t hear back for about a week so she called him to follow-up. He was busy and said they should talk later that day. He didn’t call. She followed up with an email the following week suggesting they schedule a moment to chat and he replied that he would call her the next week. He never called.

Three weeks passed. She emailed again. He didn’t reply. He kept her hanging for months. She started to think maybe he got ill or maybe there was trouble at the company or maybe they just decided to scrap the project. She still doesn’t know what happened.

I wonder how many of his coworkers are still waiting for responses? What about other vendors? And, the question I keep asking myself is WHY? Why not take ten seconds and send an email saying we’re not moving ahead right now? Granted, we all get bombarded with email and sometimes just can’t respond to all of them but in this case, a lack of response is a show of disrespect. How Rude!

How Rude Are You?

Have you typed (emails, documents, etc.) while talking on the phone, unconcerned that your listener hears the distracting taps of your keyboard?

Yes / No

Have you stared down at a document or magazine while your co-worker is talking to you? **Yes / No**

While among friends or co-workers, have you yawned without covering your mouth? **Yes / No**

Do you routinely ignore email and phone messages from co-workers, clients or vendors, by not giving the sender the courtesy of a quick response?

Yes / No

Do you answer your cell phone while having a conversation with someone else?

Yes / No

If you answered yes to none or only one of the questions:

-- If everyone were as considerate and respectful as you are, the world would be a better place.

If you answered yes to two or three of the questions:

---You've got situational rudeness. It probably depends on the time and place. But why should time and place matter anyway?

If you answered yes to four or five of the questions:

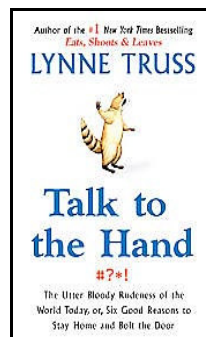
--You're rude! What if a hidden camera were following you all day? Would you still act the same way?

Adapted from the survey seen on ABC's 20/20

There cannot be greater rudeness than to interrupt another.

-John Locke

Read More About It...



This delightful book is written by bestselling British author Lynne Truss. Overstock.com says "She decries the lack of common courtesy in everyday interactions in this brief manifesto against bad manners, describing six major areas where politeness appears to have entirely broken down. While the book is not an etiquette guide, the various illustrations of her main theme--that most contemporary forms of rudeness stem from a refusal to take personal responsibility for one's actions--give direction toward creating a more civilized future society." And, the subtitle is great! *The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the World Today, or Six Good Reasons to Stay Home and Bolt the Door*

Email Your Questions to Nancy@nancystern.com

Q

During meetings and presentations my coworkers often use their laptops or BlackBerrys while I'm trying to communicate important information. What can I do to prevent this?

A

It seems the more connected we get the more disconnected we are becoming. BlackBerrys, cell phones, laptops and pagers that are distracting and basically rude should not be turned on during meetings or presentations.

First things first. When the meeting starts, set some gadget

ground rules. I recommend a ban on all of it until a scheduled break during which time people can email, talk, Google or whatever to their hearts content. Then, when the meeting resumes, ask that people turn all devices off.

If someone is involved in a crisis or family emergency, feel free to make an exception but ask that the volume be turned down or set to vibrate. And, if people are not following the rules, you might want to ask yourself if you could be more engaging. Or, perhaps your coworkers are in meeting overload and a different method of communicating would be better.

*America is a model
of force and
freedom and
moderation - with
all the coarseness
and rudeness
of its people.*

-Lord Byron

Stop Being Rude

1. Follow-through. Do what you say you will do.
2. Close the loop. Reply to email. Let the sender know you received the message, even if all you say is "thanks" or "got it" or "great."
3. Don't talk on your cell phone in public places. No one wants to hear about your personal problems while waiting in the checkout line at the grocery store.
4. Remember the basics. A simple "*please and thank you*" go a long way.
5. The Golden Rule Revisited; *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

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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.

Programs & Topics Include:

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- Leadership Dynamics™
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- Facilitate to Motivate and Manage Conflict™
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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