

## Talent Development 26 Communication

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Section 1.1 in the CPTD Certification program for ATD is Communication. Section C reads, “Skill in conceiving, developing, and delivering information in various formats and media.”

I will share my process for injecting a great variety of communication tools in my leadership development work.

In a world where increasingly we do training and development remotely, it is imperative to spice up the

content using a variety of communication methods to keep people from zoning out. Let’s apply this idea to several areas of leadership training.

### Starting up

Have some kind of ice breaker or informal discussion to get people feeling comfortable with communicating openly. This activity is especially important if the group is just meeting for the first time.

Do not belabor this start-up ritual, but do provide some informal way to get things going. I like to go around the room and have all participants introduce themselves and state what they hope to get out of the training. Then I can make a comment.

For example, if one person says she wants to know how to build higher trust within her group, I might say “I’m glad you brought that subject up, Kathy. We will be covering the concept of building higher trust extensively in session two of this course.”

## **Brainstorms**

You can get people involved by asking them to come up with a lot of ideas on a specific topic. You can work as a large group or put people into breakout rooms for more intimate discussions. If you do the latter, make sure to have each room appoint a spokes person who can report ideas generated to the larger group once people return.

## **Slides**

The use of PowerPoint or some other form of content delivery is essential to keep things on track, but you must avoid the “death by PowerPoint” syndrome. Here are some rules I use to keep the PPT from taking over and putting everyone to sleep.

- 1, Less than 5 bullets on each slide and less than 8 words per bullet
2. Use a plain white background
3. Include a photograph (not clip art) to illustrate the concept being discussed. Be sure to obtain a license for each photograph used. If you can find something humorous or provocative to illustrate your point, that helps.
4. Never read your slides. Talk about the concepts and ask questions. Engage the group.
5. Move quickly unless you are embellishing the content with a story or some kind of gag.
6. Switch in and out of the screen share frequently to add variety.

## **Stories**

Work to add stories (humorous or serious) to help illustrate your points. Keep the stories brief and always ask if anyone in the group has a story they wish to add.

## **Demonstrations**

It helps to have some demonstrations with actual props. That practice engages the brain in a different way and keeps the mind fresh. I have several quirky demonstrations to enhance my training. For example, here is a brief video of a demonstration I call my [“Trust Barometer.”](#)

## **Illusions**

I use magic illusions to break up the presentation and to keep people fresh. The illusions need to be very well done and professional, and they must bear some

relationship to the topic being discussed. For example, in a module on managing change, I might do a coin trick to help illustrate it.

## **Videos**

I have a collection of over 200 videos I can draw on to liven the discussion and give participants a break from listening to me. Some of these are humorous and others are inspirational. The feedback from participants is always that the videos provide excellent inspirational content in a different format. I generally try to work in a video during every couple hours of classroom time. The videos range in time from 5 minutes to 25 minutes.

## **Role Playing**

I have frequent role play exercises where I send people off in pairs or triplets to act out a scene. This technique gets tricky, because I need to arrange different scripts for each participant. It takes advanced planning to pull this off, and I need to pay attention to who is in which room. For example, if the role play is between a supervisor and a problem employee, each person will have instructions that look at the situation from just their point of view. They are blind to the point of view of the other person until the role play begins.

## **Polling**

I insert polls on occasion so participants get physically involved in the presentation. It is important to debrief each poll stating the conclusion that can be drawn.

## **Annotating**

I use the various annotation tools to help provide emphasis on certain slides. I am careful to not overuse the technique frequently enough to annoy people. Perhaps one in 20 slides will be suitable for annotation in some form.

## **Chat**

The chat room is an excellent way to get people involved or allow them to ask questions on the fly. The challenge here is to be able to monitor the chat while you are still facilitating the entire class. I find it difficult to keep up, so I normally appoint someone to monitor the chat and rotate the chore for each class to share the load.

## **Debrief**

Always allow time at the end of a session to debrief. Ask the group what went well for them and what things I might have done differently. Listen carefully to the input and make the appropriate adjustments for future sessions.

## Conclusion

Delivering the content in this variety of ways makes the class time go quickly and helps the group retain the material longer. Participants report having a “great time” while learning some important new skills.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*, and *Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.

