



Hello and welcome to another edition of Troubleshooting where we take your troubles and do our best to support you through them.

You are all welcome to submit your own trouble, to share your own experiences and support, or just to hang out and listen.

Let's go to today's trouble.

*"My supervisor recently told me that she found my emails rude and disrespectful. I am a direct communicator but consider myself to always be professional. When I asked my staff what they thought, some agreed with my supervisor's assessment / accusation and others did not. What am I supposed to do with this?"*

Like all of these, there's so much in there and there's so many different directions we could go with how to talk about all the stuff that's in here, how to offer some support and tips and strategies.

The question is broad.

'What am I supposed to do with this' is really broad.

It includes the person's own supervisor, it includes the person's staff, and with all communication, it's really interesting to point out here that different people are giving different feedback.

So, what do you do as a supervisor?

What do you do as a human being?

When one person says the way you're doing this is wrong or bad in the simplest terms or the way you're doing this is just fine or even good or great. Communication itself is so complicated, right?

So, let's start really broad like the question was and look at our first thing to consider, which is, who do you seem to communicate with easily and who do you seem to struggle with?

If you go through your day and the many, many people you interact with all day, every day, professionally and personally, in person, by email, by text, by phone, all the many, many ways that we communicate and connect with other people, my guess is there's some people where it feels like you can just be who you are, say what you want to say and it just feels comfortable and easy.

With other people, you might feel like you're walking on eggshells or you can't understand them very easily or when you try to communicate with them, they never seem to understand what you're saying, or they might take offense to things you're saying or it seems like you're sort of putting on a show or pretending to be someone



you're not to try and communicate more effectively.

My guess is if you go through those many, many people that you communicate with, that you will have some one side that are really easy to communicate with and some on the other side.

I encourage you to really look at what patterns might come up for you.

In some cases, people who communicate in certain areas- because communication is so huge- but with people who we communicate well with, there might be one area of our communication that we're really in sync with. For example, people who are long-winded or people who get right to the point, people who talk in stories or people who talk in numbers, people who love to just text or people who only like to talk on the phone.

It could be how you communicate, through what method you communicate in lots of different ways.

The people you find easy to communicate with, what makes it easy and what patterns can you identify by looking at hopefully the many people you can communicate with easily?

On the flip side of that, what about the people who you seem to have a lot of trouble communicating with? What is it about your communication that is so difficult?

As you're going through this exercise, be cautious of only pointing fingers at the other person. This is so easy to do.

We don't communicate well because they...

Resist the urge and try to figure out what it is about your own communication that is contributing to the miscommunication.

Even in cases when it's 99% the other person's fault, we always are a part of the equation.

Yes, you can still try to identify what it is about the other person's communication, but make sure you're also looking at your own communication.

As you go through this, what do you notice? What do you learn? What patterns do you identify that help give you a better picture of what naturally works for you and what naturally doesn't stop there.

Of course, self-awareness, the baseline is the first step. Taking it a step further to say, When do you feel like your communication is clear? Is well received? Is mission accomplished?

At this point we want to continue with the self-reflection but move past it as well to that



external feedback.

Remember, self-awareness is key and it's limited. We're only self-aware of the things we're self-aware of and we can't be self-aware about everything.

How people perceive us, how people experience us, how people think of us is different person to person to person to person.

It's helpful to hear from different people, perhaps a couple on the side of the list you put that you communicate with well.

On the other side, those who you think you don't communicate very well with and get their feedback, what would they say about your communication that makes life easier for them or makes life a little bit more difficult?

Again, what patterns are coming up for you once you do that combination?

Like anything else with learning and growth, it's ongoing. It's not a one-time thing.

Once you start this process of some self-reflection as well as getting external feedback, action is important. To take action, we need to understand the purpose.

Who cares if your communication is good or bad?

That's somewhat rhetorical. But mostly it requires an answer.

It might seem obvious, like of course communication is important. Well yes, of course it's important, but why? Why bother sharing this trouble?

Obviously, it's something that's impacting something else.

When you get this response from your supervisor that your communication is rude and disrespectful, then what do you do with that?

That was your question, what do I do with this?

Start with why is communication important to you and what are you trying to accomplish with your communication?

These are all directly related to the initial issue of it was brought to my attention that someone who has authority over me finds my communication rude and disrespectful. There are obviously implications to that, but not just this person.

You then asked your staff, some of which agreed, some of which disagreed. We can gather from what you wrote that multiple people think that your communication is rude and disrespectful and multiple people don't. So, what do you do with that? Well, you have options.



The first option is you can do nothing. You can continue the path that you're on and say, this is the way I communicate. It might rub some people the wrong way. It's perfectly fine for other people and I'm okay with that. There's an argument to be made for being who you are and not adjusting and making sure that the criticisms you're receiving aren't targeted to you because of -insert demographic here- because perhaps you're a woman or perhaps it's because of your race or your nationality or any number of things where we perceive or judge other people's communication based on demographic factors.

So, it could be dynamic. Again, we don't know with your supervisor that some of your supervisor's biases are coming in here and you don't want to cater to those biases, in which case you'll continue on course and communicate as you communicate and there's nothing wrong with it.

You may also decide and /or with point number one that the purpose of your communication is to do your work effectively.

If from this feedback and perhaps from other feedback that you start to receive are finding that the way you communicate gets in the way of the work you're trying to accomplish, then what?

With communication, like with anything else that we do, the way we run a meeting, the way we give feedback, the way that we problem solve, the way that we go about our daily work, you have a natural setting, you have your default, you have the way that you like it to be done. It will work to varying degrees with different people.

Think about the way that you customize, how you communicate who you are in a professional setting, in a personal setting with the many different people that you interact with, in learning about how to work with people and build relationships with people in different ways.

No two relationships are the same and no two forms of the way you communicate with one another are going to be the same.

In the concept, in the spirit of situational leadership and customized leadership, where are there opportunities for you to say, this is my default, this is the way I prefer to communicate, but when I communicate with this person that way we're not on the same page or we can't accomplish what we're trying to accomplish because we're not being clear with each other or we're not open to listening to each other.

If I could adjust the way I communicate and do it in a way that they can hear it better, then I'm willing to do that.

I think of these examples of method.

People that really prefer texting or really prefer email or really prefer in-person



meetings- you likely have your own preference.

Where are there opportunities where you can adjust to other people's preferences?

Also, I always say this metaphor of what language do people speak? Some people speak in stories, some people speak in numbers, some people speak directly, some people beat around the bush.

Where are there opportunities for you to adjust the language you speak to make your communication more effective?

What do you think? Where does this show up for you?

What are some strategies that you've incorporated that have made your communication a lot more effective? What advice, recommendation, encouragement, support do you have for the person who wrote in?

Again, if you want your trouble shot, please send an email. You can post in the forum, and we'll be sure to support you and encourage you in the same way.

Thanks so much for being here. We'll see you next time!