



Strengthening Forest Communications in the Asia Pacific Region

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COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

Communication is a two-way process of providing and receiving information. It can be direct from person to person, or indirect through a medium or channel such as a radio or telephone.

It can be influenced by many factors including:

- ✦ the language and vocabulary being used;
- ✦ the complexity of the subject;
- ✦ distractions and interference;
- ✦ the credibility of the communicator;
- ✦ the style or authority of the speaker;
- ✦ their tone of voice.

An amazing amount of day to day communication is non-verbal. Research shows that the majority of our communication is through body language. Some of non verbal communication includes gesture or posture; facial expressions and eye contact. Even objects can communicate - for example, our clothing or hairstyle.

Visual elements are important too. It is often said that people remember:

10% of what they read

20% of what they hear

30% of what they see

40% of what they hear and see

Some common barriers to communication include:

- ⤴ message overload (when a person receives too many messages at the same time),
- ⤴ message complexity, where the message is too difficult or complicated
- ⤴ noise can interfere with the understanding of messages. Would you stand beside the speakers at a party if you wanted to have conversation?
- ⤴ Physical maladies such as blindness or deafness can prevent effective communication
- ⤴ People might have different interpretations of meaning - perhaps because of cultural differences
- ⤴ Poorly structured communication can prevent the receiver from accurate interpretation. For example, unclear and badly stated directions can make the receiver even more lost
- ⤴ Certain attitudes can also make communication difficult. For instance, tiredness, anger or sadness

Effective communication is a two-way process - it requires a transmitter and a receiver. Getting and giving feedback is one of the most crucial parts of good communication and so listening is a key part of communicating. Unfortunately, the forestry world has not always been very good at listening or seeking other people's views.

Principles

So, while we might all communicate from the very first cries of birth, it is clearly a complex thing. But there are some fundamental general principles we can apply to ensure our communications are effective:

- ⤴ **Be clear** what it is you want to communicate, what you want to achieve, what action you want to result
- ⤴ **Understand who you are communicating** with - what language do they use, what are their beliefs or prejudices?
- ⤴ **Make yourself relevant** - the forestry sector has long had a problem in communicating with the new partners and stakeholders, particularly in making forests and forestry relevant outside our own sector. Rather than engaging with stakeholder groups on our own agenda we must tailor our approach so that we make ourselves relevant and valuable to theirs. This requires careful analysis of the problems faced by others, and a solution, rather than issue or problem, based approach
- ⤴ **Listen**, as well as talk - dialogue will always prove to be more effective than monologue so we need to listen to the needs and concerns of others, to encourage conversation and debate.
- ⤴ Use language that is appropriate, **avoid jargon** and the acronyms that are so prevalent in forestry circles, science community and international relations
- ⤴ Remember the **importance of body language** and tone of voice

- ⤴ **Avoid propaganda** - be honest and transparent at all times and prepared to say when there is doubt, or where we don't yet have all the answers
- ⤴ **Use imagery and visual tools** to convey and reinforce messages and make important emotional links
- ⤴ **Be consistent** - to avoid confusion and 'off message' communications use clear and, consistent messages
- ⤴ **Expect barriers** and plan to overcome them
- ⤴ **Select communication tools** and channels for their ability to convey messages effectively and efficiently to identified targets groups
- ⤴ **Timing is important.** There are good times to communicate, and bad ones.
- ⤴ You can't take something back once it has been said so **choose your words and your actions carefully**
- ⤴ **People will judge you** more on what you do than on what you say