

In these financially challenging times, effective communication is essential. Our latest article is full of easy to apply tips. Forward it to any of your colleagues, or use it for a team discussion. To unsubscribe reply and type "**unsubscribe**" in the subject line, or use this link: [unsubscribe](#).

Warm regards,

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### **Communicate Frequently: Turn Crisis into Opportunities**

With reduced budgets and limited resources, anxiety and fear tend to soar. For leaders, communicating frequently about what's happening is a powerful strategy for decreasing anxiety. Keeping folks in the loop and encouraging dialogue decreases stress and keeps productivity steady. Challenging economic times call for good listening skills and empathy. Building trust and motivation through good communication pays good dividends.

In times of fear, miscommunications abound, wasting enormous amounts of time and energy. Most misunderstandings can be avoided if you practice timely and appropriate communication.

Here are The Consulting Team's top three tips for successful communication in a challenging economy:

1. **Plan your communications.** Use language designed to engage your staff when you talk straight with them about challenges and opportunities in their current assignments. When in doubt, outline your communication objectives prior to a meeting or when writing an email or letter.
2. **Be aware of "non-verbals."** Tone and body language speak before you utter a word. The brain takes in body language and tone *before* it processes any of your communication's content. In a challenging economy, people will make meaning from even the simplest facial expression because they are anxious and hungry for information. Managing your voice tone and gestures is critical for successful communication any time, more so when employees are stressed from budget restrictions and increased workloads.

Be attuned to other's non-verbals, too. They will give you useful information regarding your team's willingness to engage and their anxiety levels.

So, as you plan your communications, consider these strategies to support your effective communication:

- People’s folded arms and crossed legs often signal rejection of what they are hearing, while their open hands and postures signal acceptance. When you listen, which posture will you choose?
- When someone leans forward, they are actively involved with what the other is saying. Try this when you talk with your team.
- Good communicators sit or stand with an upright, but relaxed posture. Ask a colleague if you look relaxed when you speak.
- A desk or table between you and another person may create a feeling of distance and formality. Getting out from behind the desk may be a good strategy.

**3. Keep a positive tone.** Take more time to give praise than critical feedback. Find opportunities to acknowledge others’ contributions, and express gratitude for jobs well done.

The management team sets the tone of the work environment. Practice treating teams and staff like you treat your valued customers. Focus on common goals. You will be paid back in increased motivation and trust, critical in times of crisis.

Stressful circumstances can trigger negative communication, but remember, communication is irreversible and leaves “residue.” Once something is communicated, verbally or in writing, there is no taking it back. In particular, email and instant messages can be misinterpreted because of the lack of non-verbal cues.

Consider your objective as you communicate. When you need something from your team use a respectful assertive approach and offer a win-win proposition to which your team can respond. When people respect each other, they listen better to others’ needs and can be direct about their own. Win-win propositions are particularly successful when conditions are tough and people expect bad news.

Taking extra time to communicate right the first time will build strong connections and avoid crises. It can also turn stress into opportunities to build trusting relationships.

**Communication can always be improved.**

Even the best communicators seek to improve their skills. They revise their words, practice what they will say, ask others for feedback, take classes, read books on written and oral communication, and study people whose communication style they admire. It is not easy to communicate well; however, next time you have an effective exchange, analyze the situation and try to isolate the ingredients that led to success. Consider providing some written and verbal communication training for your team

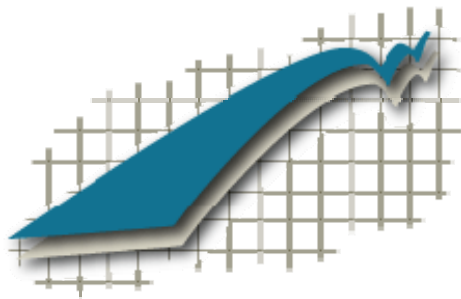
**Want to learn more?**

- Check out our web site for free resources including the article “*Closing the Communication Gap: Managing Conflicts in High Tech Environments,*” at [www.theconsultingteam.com/Articles.html#manageconflict](http://www.theconsultingteam.com/Articles.html#manageconflict).
- We are now offering a four-hour Business Writing workshop designed to improve the effectiveness of your letters, memos, reports, and emails that you send to your customers and colleagues. For more information contact [info@theconsultingteam.com](mailto:info@theconsultingteam.com).

## Thriving in a Challenging Economy

- This financially challenging time can be the best time to provide training or coaching, because your team is dealing with revised work priorities. Training also tends to be retained by as much as 300% more, when it's not squeezed in between hot projects and overbooked schedules.
- Need more innovative thinking? Do you need to get out of the box or, maybe, out of your own way? Consider a facilitated meeting for an outside point of view, to help identify process or team improvements. A single improvement can easily create thousands of dollars of saved time or money.
- Call to learn more about our cost-effective Brown Bag Workshops!

### Meet Our Core Team



The Consulting Team, LLC



Marilyn Manning, Ph.D., CEO



Elaine Schmitz



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Victoria Smith-Raymond



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The Consulting Team offers consultants and trainers who each bring over 15 years of experience and whose individual expertise adds breadth and depth to our services. Over the coming months, we will introduce you to the core members of the team: Elaine Schmitz, Ken Braly, Victoria Smith-Raymond, Howard Miller, Lee Weimer, and Nan Andrews Amish.

This month, meet **Elaine Schmitz**, business consultant and author who offers consulting services in leadership, team building, strategic planning, project management, business writing, process management and measurement, and customer service. Her solid management experience in these subjects backs up her extensive knowledge. With a master's degree in organizational development, Elaine provides a mix of process mapping and improvement techniques and effective management strategies as well as coaching, meeting facilitation, training, and course development. She has worked with CEOs and government officials, as well as managers, field technicians, and service reps. Her personal job satisfaction comes from helping others' to develop their potential to meet their personal and professional goals.

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