# Inter-Departmental Communication

**(This is an excerpt from a workshop designed to force departments to communicate and take ownership of their responsibilities and develop client relationships.)**

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**AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY**

Wade Brawley is President of LandVest Company, Inc., specializing in land information management, training and seminars. As former Vice President of Land Administration for Chesapeake Energy Company, one of Wade Brawley's responsibilities was to ensure efficient workflow, communication and business process re-engineering between Land, Lease Records, Division Orders and Accounting personnel. Wade Brawley's publishing credits include various articles published in The American Oil and Gas Reporter, World Oil and Landman. Wade Brawley also contributed to the fourth edition of Brock's Petroleum Accounting Principles, Procedures & Issues. Prior to his employment at Chesapeake, Wade consulted in areas of acquisitions, mergers, business process re-engineering, system conversions, training and administrative outsourcing. Wade conducted his undergraduate studies at the University of Texas and obtained his MBA at Oklahoma City University.

## COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

Before asking a question, always start by making a statement to declare your position.
Speak from your own experience, rather than give advice

- Use “I” statements
- Speak in specifics – not generalities
- Ask “how” – not “why”

Did you know that when communicating, only 7% of the meaning is derived from words? 38% of the meaning comes from HOW YOU SAY YOUR WORDS, and 55% of the meaning is from body language. There are successful ways to communicate body language via the telephone.

**Smile:** You know when a person is smiling on the other end of the telephone.

**Stay Energized:** If you feel your energy lagging, stand up. Stretch. Move your body. Smile. Take a few deep breaths. The renewed animation will transform your attitude.

**Gesture:** When your body is moving, it livens your thought process and speech. When your body is inert and your head slumped down, the listener can hear this in your voice. Use your hands to demonstrate. It translates to the listener.

**Transmit Clear, Accurate Visual Images:** The words you use describe who you are and help the listener build a sense of trust and rapport with you.

**Get Feedback**: It’s important to be sure you were understood.

- Don’t ask: “Mr. Smith, did you understand that?”

- Do ask: “Mr. Smith, let me be sure I’ve expressed myself clearly, what’s your understanding of the next step we need to take?

- This allows you to either: Correct the misunderstanding.
  Clarify the part of your message that was misunderstood.
  Confirm that the listener understood correctly.

**VALUABLE EMAIL TIPS**

1) Whenever requesting action by another department, the request should be carefully crafted so the recipient feels the request is well thought out and warranted. If we expect the recipient to initiate some kind of action or process, we owe that person the courtesy of delivering our request in a concise and proofed e-mail and they will acknowledge that we have devoted adequate thought to our request.

2) If you are forwarding an "e-mail chain" to someone, always explain <u>why</u> you are sending the chain and also <u>summarize</u> the chain (or at least direct the reader to the pertinent points ). It is inconsiderate and a waste of resources to forward a multi-page e-mail to someone and expect her to read every entry in order to decipher why she has been added to the chain. By the same token, if some kind of action is expected of the recipient, you don't want to risk the recipient not picking up on what she needs to do.

3) To avoid confusion and duplication, please be mindful to only add recipients to the "TO" line who are targeted for the request, or action. Add others you feel need to merely be aware of the communication to the "CC" line

4) Before adding cc's to your e-mail, consider whether the listed parties really need to receive the information. Some of us receive over 100 e-mails daily.

5) TYPING IN UPPERCASE and the use of an exclamation remark implies anger!!! While their usage might seem appropriate in your mind at the time you draft the e-mail, it really is never appropriate in an office environment.

6) If you are responding in anger, it is best to save your email as a draft, then reopen and edit the next day. You want your communication to reflect facts - not emotion.

7) Know when it's time to stop emailing and pick up the phone, or walk to the person's office. Sometimes you can salvage a working relationship and facilitate more productivity by good old fashioned personal communication.

8) Attachments that can be printed should be formatted to print. Check your margins and other page setup conditions on any excel file you attach to an email.

9) Whenever possible, always send a link instead of an attachment. This is especially true if it is a large document as this requires more server space.

# ACTIVE LISTENING

Being client focused is about taking a genuine interest in the client's need or problem. It is about looking at a situation from the client's perspective. Active listening is a critical part of being client focused. Passive listening is just letting the client's words flow over us. Active listening is showing the client that we are paying attention and are interested in what he/she is saying.

One key ingredient in active listening is the skill of REFLECTING, or testing your understanding of what the client just said. Reflecting is seeking a match in your mind with the meaning in the client's mind. This is an extremely valuable client service skill.

REFLECTING: Restating, in your own words, both the content and the feeling of what you understand the other to have just said.

Content = What the words mean.

Feeling = How the person really feels

EXAMPLE:

Client Statement: "I've had it with lease records not showing the right acreage"

Lease Records Analyst: "We're all doing the best we can. As you know, we haven't had the luxury of time to correct these problems due to the high volume of work."

*-or-*

Lease Records Analyst: "I can understand your frustration. I feel the same way. I always correct these errors when I encounter them, but please don't hesitate to note the lease number and let me know anytime you find this kind of error."

STEPS TO REFLECT AND TEST UNDERSTANDING

- Understand the client's position before drawing conclusions or constructing your answer.
- Listen between the lines for content and how the client feels about his/her position.
- Pause and consider what you've just heard before replying.
- Assume you don't understand and ask for feedback on what you think you heard.

## DE-FUSION

**L-S-C-P-A FORMULA**

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| **Listen** | People need to vent. Allow the client to tell what has happened and express associated emotions. |
| **Support** | Empathize with the client. Feedback the emotion you are hearing. Encourage the client to talk about that emotion. Let the client know that you understand the feeling and would feel the same way under the circumstances. Apologize. |
| **Condition** | Advise the client of your circumstances and/or limitations. |
| **Present** | Offer the client an alternative solution that you can provide. (Don't tell them what you can't do; tell them what you <u>can</u> <u>do</u>.) |
| **Ask** | Obtain client acceptance of the alternative solution. |

**It is imperative that every step be followed, in sequence, in order for the formula to work.**