

SW&A Tailored Programs



WE INSPIRE PEOPLE TO ENGAGE, INFLUENCE AND IMPACT OTHERS THROUGH COMPELLING COMMUNICATION.

Our Methodology



Communication is an all-encompassing skill that impacts every employee through meetings, presentations and the personal impressions that develop across an organization. We help people influence all of these situations. We begin that process by evaluating two fundamentals of communication: content...*what you say* and style... *how you say it*.



Content – Most listeners give a communicator about 30 seconds to set a message and direction for their storyline. An effective communicator learns how to format ideas to frame a message and set the structure quickly to keep the listener(s) involved. We teach how to organize a storyline, create a compelling message and leverage stories to be sure sound bites are heard and remembered.

Style – Personal style, is presence, the ability to engage an individual or a group from the start of a conversation. An effective communicator comes across as confident and credible, conveying a sense of commitment to their topic and a personal interest in connecting the topic to each listener. Our approach to style teaches the intentional choices communicators make to deliver on those impressions.

Situations—While the tools stay the same, the situations don't. Every communicator thinks about their audience differently from those who interact with small groups to those who deliver keynote speeches. They think about outcomes differently, too. From meetings that generate discovery to recommendations that gain approval. That's why the third dimension of our work applies the fundamentals to specific situations. It helps a communicator shift from competence in their skills to consistent outcomes in their communication.

We get the best results when a foundational program includes the tools for organizing thoughts and delivering them with impact. Then, we tailor the program to apply both skills to situations that are most relevant to participants in a program.

Popular Communication Topics



Content

Leading Executive Conversations:

The missing component in most executive conversations is a clear message. More than any other listener, an executive wants to know the bottom-line benefit or decision that needs to be made right up front. The message frames their role in the conversation and engages an executive quickly by providing context. Without a message or focus, executives become impatient and distracted. An impatient executive can quickly throw a presenter and a conversation off track.

This session teaches the fundamentals of organizing a high-level conversation to meet the executive's perspective and expectations. The format involves managers in a roleplay for discovery of how they approach conversations today and the disconnect with what most leaders value.

Connecting Stories to Storylines:

Everyone is a storyteller whether you're on a stage, across a conference table, or on a video conference. Impactful presentations leverage the power of storylines to reach an objective. The best approach is to start with a compelling message, and then learn to develop a storyline that proves it out. The storyline itself is the framework of communication or the flow of ideas. Specific stories are tied to specific points within the storyline. Good data points align with the brain, and good stories align with the heart. Presenters who can engage both head and heart have a much greater chance of getting results.

Impactful communication leverages the power and clarity within a storyline to lead listeners to an outcome or takeaway. The storyline is the structure of content that consists of a compelling message and a flexible framework that allows the communicator to engage and involve the listener in the flow of ideas.

This session introduces the fundamentals of a listener-focused presentation. Participants see how concepts are applied to a sample scenario, and they participate in small group exercises to think through each step.

Popular Communication Topics



Strengthening Personal Brand & Impressions:

It doesn't take long to notice that some people stand out and get noticed in a business setting. Whether it's a staff meeting, a client discussion or even a social hour, we notice people who seem confident and comfortable. They can talk to anyone without getting nervous or caught off guard when focus shifts to them for an answer to a question or more detail on a data point.

And if you look closely, those impressions of confidence are driven by an open and settled body and a full and measured tone to their voice. It's why they get heard when they speak and noticed when they enter a room. Confidence isn't just a skill for leaders; it's a differentiator that strengthens any employee's personal brand and impact in an organization.

This session introduces the foundational skills of personal presence and the choices that can influence impressions. Through small group feedback, participants evaluate their own personal brand and learn a few key takeaways to begin work on their own style.

Mastering Executive Presence:

As individuals progress in their careers, executive presence becomes an expectation of leadership. Presence isn't something you give yourself but something you earn from those around you who come to respect your right to speak and your ability to lead. Presence isn't a technique but an embedded skill that becomes a personal brand trait and helps a communicator influence a group of listeners.

This is a follow-up to our Strengthening Personal Brand & Impressions course and is for seasoned managers or new leaders who want to strengthen their ability to engage and influence listeners.

Popular Communication Topics



Situation

Influencing Without Authority:

As employees begin to drive bigger initiatives and communicate with cross-functional leaders, they often hear feedback: “You’re in the weeds. You’re sharing too much detail.” It’s feedback that means you should recognize the difference in what you’re doing and how we’re asking you to communicate it.

You could call it the difference in talking about outcomes you'll deliver vs. activities you’re doing to get to outcomes. The challenge for employees is that they don’t always see the difference in their activities and someone else’s outcome which can lead to confusion and wasted effort. To communicate effectively, many employees need help shifting from a tactical mindset to a more strategic view.

This one-day program helps participants consider how influence happens within companies and how leaders leverage insights and inputs. Then, we introduce tools to help a communicator consider a leader’s perspective, align to outcomes and priorities that value their insights and leverage a content structure to influence decisions and actions.

Handling The Q&A

If confidence and clarity got you in a high-stakes meeting, it’s the ability to manage questions well that gets you back to the next one.

In the toolkit of communication skills, the inability to answer questions well can become a real vulnerability for a communicator. As leaders interact with communicators, they always gauge how well someone shows up. Style and presence matter, and clarity of messaging matters. But the ability to transfer knowledge through how questions are answered may matter the most.

Answering questions isn’t always easy. Questions are dynamic. They come from listeners, so you prepare for them the same way you prepare your storyline. You can anticipate about 60% of what will be asked if you consider the listeners’ perspective. But questions require real-time, in-the-moment content that means thinking on your feet and being as clear and focused as you were throughout the presentation.

This workshop introduces the art and intentional process of thinking on your feet and managing questions effectively. Participants learn SW&A’s three-step process for answering questions as well as the finer nuances of how to expand upon a question and lead a listener to your desired outcome.

Popular Communication Topics

Establishing Relatability & Credibility Through Video:

Success in any pre-taped recording is based on preparation. All communicators want to come across as personable, conversational and involved. The challenge is that, without an audience to make communication a back-and-forth discussion, a communicator has to be more intentional and more focused on how energy feels to draw response when a video is viewed.

When we coach someone on how to engage with a live group, we coach attributes of involvement and responsiveness in order to help a communicator draw a group of listeners into their ideas. When we coach someone to produce a video, we focus more on sound bites and the ability to create interest without reaction. It's a shift from getting something back to assuming it's there. And for every communicator, it's different enough to consider it a different medium with a new set of guidelines.

From Manager to Leader:

Many managers aspire to be leaders, and with the right effort and development, they may be. But with the "great resignation" and continued churn in leadership roles, some managers have been challenged to lead sooner than planned. Almost overnight, they've stepped up to roles that they thought were a few years down the road. It's exciting to see companies accelerate new leaders, and it's risky to see individuals try to navigate a role they weren't quite ready for. Companies are asking new leaders to figure it out as they go, and new leaders are struggling to get up to speed without the experiences and skills to guide more complex teams and decisioning.

And that's why SW&A developed a program and playbook to help seasoned managers transition to confident leaders. It starts with setting guidelines to identify the skill sets a leader needs, the team dynamics they should develop and the relationships that they should leverage to gain confidence quickly. It's a combination of awareness, best practices, new tools and coaching to help a leader focus on the right things as they build the support they need to set direction, align individuals to actions and drive teams to outcomes.

This program best supports a new leader who feels significant change in a new role. Their responsibilities have expanded by the number of functions they oversee and the number of employees in their group. Their portfolio has become a diverse group of functions that may not have natural alignment or reason to work well together. They balance priorities to different stakeholders and they feel full responsibility for delivering on goals, initiatives and outcomes.

Popular Communication Topics

Delivering Effective Feedback:

Managing people really comes down to understanding behaviors and learning to read cues about those behaviors. Most managers build teams of people that they find easy to read and manage. But as teams grow and responsibilities expand, young leaders find that the group is more diverse and there are often gaps in how to influence and motivate a more diverse group.

Most managers learn these skills through trial and error, but a leader really has to develop more of a formula for capturing feedback, managing through waves of change or unrest and leading an entire group forward.

In this session, we evaluate the tools that leaders are currently using to create two-way communication, and we talk through the harder employee groups to engage. Then, we help the group think through a consistent strategy and replicable plan to keep their employees involved and motivated.

Stewarding Your Career:

Disruption happens every day in most business settings. As employees, we experience reorgs, layoffs and acquisitions, and as disrupters ourselves we move cross country, chase ideas and challenge norms. Whenever and however disruption happens, it causes a reset in a career.

Talent leaders agree. The resets are more frequent and often unexpected. And they disrupt employees who aren't prepared to position themselves for the next opportunity. And it's why talent leaders advise that individuals should take ownership for their own career path and development.

Those who thrive in disruption understand two things that most impact the ability to navigate disruption and reset their careers: they know how to position their brands and how to tell their own stories.

In this program, we coach participants how to take ownership for their career direction and highlight their career journey by constructing a compelling career narrative, as well as how to identify influencers and build relationships that will help elevate your brand and position your story for the next opportunity. And we pull the tools together through roleplays designed to coach the positioning of you and your skill set.