Effective Communication (hopefully…)  
Phill Talavinia, Director of Athletics  
Bluffton University

**Agenda**

- The Basic Communication Model.
- Communication with key constituents.
- Seven steps to effective decision making.

Using Ancient Wisdom to Stop Destructive Communication in its Tracks:

With an assist to:

Marathana Prothro  
Assistant Professor of Communication  
Bluffton University
RECOGNIZE destructive communication.

AGREE to be a different kind of communicator.
Communication with Key Constituents

• Why is communication important as an athletics director (AD)?
  o Institutional and department decision making.
  o Department environment.
    ▪ Be available and listen.
    ▪ Be alert to individual reactions.
    ▪ Be well-informed about resources.
  o Consistency in understanding roles/responsibilities.
  o Knowledge and greater understanding of leadership styles of AD and other staff.

Who?

• President and/or direct report.
• Campus administrators.
  o Dean of students; residence life.
  o Human resources.
  o Admissions and financial aid.
  o Faculty.
  o Career services; academic advising.
• Internal athletics staff.
  o Senior woman administrator and others.
  o Facilities and operations.
  o Sports information.
  o Sports medicine.

In What Way?

• One-on-one (face-to-face).
• Emails, text, call.

How Often?

• Random.
• Daily or standing meetings.
• Weekly or every other week.
• Monthly.
• Quarterly.
Small Group Discussion

- How do you communicate with your president and/or direct report?
- Who do you consider key internal athletics staff?
  - Why are they included?
  - What is the size of your “key internal group?”
  - How do you communicate individually?
  - How do you communicate as a group?
  - How often?

Decision Making – 7 Step Process

- Know your personality and style and surround yourself with people that complement you.
- Don’t underestimate the need for YOUR support (colleagues, friends).
- “We” should be a role model and lead the educational environment.
- Student-athlete experience is the priority.
- Coaches need to be supported.
- Trust your administrators.
- Articulate the importance of program success.
- Articulate the decision-making chain of command and the role of the athletics director.

Step One:

- Stop and THINK – “sleep on it”.
  - Take time to balance the knowledge of your environment and think through a process.
  - Do not make emotional decisions (i.e., “shoot from the hip”).
  - Realize the impact of decisions.
Step Two:

- Establish a positive decision making culture focused on:
  - Integrity in all decisions and actions.
  - Mission driven – athletics and institution.
  - Knowledge of, and commitment to, established goals.

Step Three:

- Generate potential solutions.
  - Be sure the right people are involved in the process.
    - Key people can make a real difference.
  - Discuss several scenarios/options.
  - Don’t be too quick to provide the solution.

Step Four:

- Evaluate solutions.
  - Time consuming but CRITICAL step to assess the process and scenarios.
  - Assess risk and consequences of the decision.
  - Feasibility of the decision.
    - Is it realistic to implement?
    - Will it be better than the status quo?
Step Five:

• Deciding:
  o The most exciting and stressful part of the process.
  o Think ahead and to the greatest extent.
    ▪ Don’t forget about risk and liability.

Step Six:

• Checking the decision.
  o Some decisions are not OBJECTIVE.
  o Some make sense on an intuitive or instinctive level.
  o Some are based on experience and perspective.
    ▪ Key is to check for validity and if the decision is significant make sure you and others involved challenge all assumptions.
  o Ensure the process was sound.

Step Seven:

• Communicating and implementing.
  o Do you force a decision OR do you gain acceptance through explanation of how and why?
  o Consider best way to articulate the decision and implementation process.
  o Inform/alert all leaders, as appropriate.
Thank you
Don’t be afraid to reach out and ask questions!

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