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SPECIAL REPORT

Three Little-Known Communication Strategies Guaranteed to Breathe Life into Your Organization



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Introduction

Across the country EMS organizations are dealing with similar problems:

- Disgruntled and disengaged employees/members
- Trying to motivate a unionized workforce
- High turnover of quality employees or a reduction in the number of people willing to volunteer
- Difficulty keeping the people who do volunteer
- Dealing with an aging membership
- Overall negativity and apathy of the workforce/membership
- Animosity between paid staff and volunteers

To most people these look like insurmountable problems with explanations like:

- “Young people today don’t want to volunteer”
- “People don’t care anymore. It’s just a job”
- “People have too much to do to donate their time”
- “There are less people to choose from”
- “It’s just the nature of dealing with Unions”,
- Our people are burnt out and are no longer invested
- People resist change
- Can’t get buy in

I’d like you to consider an alternative explanation... EMS agencies are not creating organizations that people want to be a part of. Let’s face it, no one wants to join a sinking ship or be a part of something where they feel they don’t matter and can’t make a difference. EMS Agencies are not creating the kind of atmosphere where people are energized, enlivened and engaged.

Instead, we have EMS organizations filled with complaints, gossip, stress and conversations for how hard it is. With all the focus on the difficulties, is it any wonder that people are not

drawn to your organization? In fact, you are repelling people from participating with you.

Usually when people think about how to improve things in an organization, what comes to mind are things like: focusing on fixing the problems, getting people more motivated, being more disciplined, enhancing teamwork or increasing focus. These are the skills touted as necessary for success. These are the things focused on in the media and training courses.

But the truth is that one skill set trumps them all...effective communication.

Think about it. What's sucking the life out of your organization is rooted in miscommunication. People most likely believe their opinions, feelings, stories and interpretations. They are then sharing those opinions, feelings, stories and interpretations as if they were facts rather than their "take" on things. This leads to all kinds of mischief and mayhem. Even when you attempt to clarify things, it doesn't work because so many people don't know how to listen without having their opinions, feelings, etc. influence what they hear.

The insider secrets shared in this e-course will allow you to quickly and easily improve communication which will have an immediate positive impact on the culture of your organization. The topics covered in this e-course are much more than tips for effective communication. The information contained in this e-course will help you to think differently which will lead to new actions and enable you to breathe new life into your organization.

Little-Known Communication Strategy #1

Conscious Listening

Listening is arguably the most important part of communication and yet we barely think about it. Most of us are unconscious to how we listen. We take listening for granted.

How you listen shapes and influences absolutely everything you encounter

I want you to think about a person who works with you or that you oversee. Write a one to three word description of that person.

Name: _____ Description: _____

Your description is how you listen to them. Your description of them is an opinion or judgment. It is your perspective. It is an assessment based on your interpretation of the facts. Every time you interact with this person, this assessment filters your experience of them, and influences what you hear, what you say, and it even influences what the other person will say to you. It doesn't matter if your assessment is positive or negative; it shapes and influences the communication.

For example, let's say you have an employee named Joe, and your assessment of Joe is that he's lazy. Now imagine you are meeting with your staff, including Joe, to assign work that is critical to your organization's success. How does your assessment of Joe effect how you'll listen to Joe? How does it influence your expectations of Joe? What if Joe mentions a potential roadblock to the fulfillment of the goal? How likely are you to take Joe's comment seriously rather than dismiss it as an attempt by Lazy Joe to get out of work?

Now imagine instead of lazy you believe that Joe is a back stabber. Now how will you hear his suggestion? Lastly, imagine that you think Joe is a hard working, team player. How does that impact how you'll respond to his suggestion?

I'm not suggesting that you totally lose the ability to hear good ideas independent of your opinions of people, nor am I suggesting you shouldn't make assessments of others. The key here is to become aware of how you listen to others and how your assessments made over time impact how you listen and act toward them, and in response, how they listen and act toward you.

Have you ever been with someone who thinks you are awesome? How does that influence how you act? Doesn't it make you feel empowered just to be around them? You find yourself naturally wanting to contribute more. Now imagine being with someone who despite your best efforts has a low opinion of you. How do you act around them? Careful? Guarded?

Now, think about a time when you have spoken to someone who is a know-it-all. What is that like for you? Were they listening to you? How did their knowing it all impact your speaking? Was it comfortable or uncomfortable? When you listen unconsciously, allowing your opinions to go unquestioned, you are being a know-it-all. You already "know-it-all" about the person you're in conversation with and the result is you aren't really listening. You already know what they are going to say and how they are going to act. People are uncomfortable trying to talk to a know-it-all and usually give up. You have to ask yourself, is that how you want people to feel around you?

First, you have to determine the way you are currently listening to the person. The easiest way is to write the person's name and next to it write a one to three word description like you did above; the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of them.

Next, begin to appreciate that the description is your opinion, not the truth.

Finally, consciously choose another way to listen. Some examples of ways to listen are listening to learn, listening to connect, listening for greatness or brilliance, listening for excellence, listening from appreciation or listening for commitment.

Conscious listening is about controlling your inner dialogue and truly being present to the other person. **People act in accordance with the listening they are provided.** We are unaware of the powerful boxes we create for people to live inside of just by how we listen to them.

Conscious listening allows for a whole new level of conversation to emerge. People become enlivened and their natural creativity and enthusiasm are unleashed. Try it and you will be amazed at the results!

Little-Known Communication Strategy #2

Separate Data from Assessment

Imagine that you had a very large piece of paper with a line down the middle splitting the page into two columns. The column on the left is labeled DATA and the column on the right is labeled ASSESSMENT.

Figure 1

Data	Assessment

Data means the facts - what is happening (or happened) in objective reality and assessment is everything else - your feelings, opinions, interpretations, beliefs, etc. Now imagine that absolutely everything in your life, past and present, fits into only one column or the other.

When you begin to see these two columns you see we really live in two worlds. There is reality i.e., the facts and then there is your perspective about reality. Most, if not all, of the time we live as if there is only one world - our assessments are reality. We act based on the assessments of the facts we see and we unconsciously fill in the blanks to give our assessment more credibility.

One very important piece to this puzzle that we are unaware of is once we make an assessment, it limits our ability to see contradictory facts. It is as if we put blinders on and our field of vision narrows to only allow us to see more proof of what we already believe. For example if you have an employee or member named Sue who has been late to her shift five times in the past two weeks angering the other members who have had

to cover for her you might assess that Sue is inconsiderate or not a team player, or passive aggressive.

Once you have your assessment, let's say inconsiderate, you then start noticing other instances that resemble inconsiderate to you such as failing to wash out the coffee pot when taking the last cup, changing the thermostat without asking others. The evidence starts piling up.

When you speak with Sue, you are not talking about her behaviors. You are talking about your conclusion about her behaviors. You added each fact up and made it equal "inconsiderate."

"Sue is inconsiderate" becomes not just your opinion it becomes reality and you live like it IS a fact. Your conversation with her is focused on helping her to be more considerate. You are acting as if you have all the facts without noticing that the mind (in it's very mischievous way) has filtered out a huge amount of data. You didn't notice how she brought coffee and bagels in for the whole crew or when she stayed late to cover for another person.

By communicating as if your conclusion is true, Sue likely will become defensive, argumentative, feel misunderstood, etc. A far more effective way to handle this type of situation is to assume there is data you do not know or cannot see given your perspective.

Discuss the facts first and leave your opinion out of it.

Here are some samples of things to say:

- Sue, I noticed (or heard) that you were late to your shift five times over the last two weeks. Can you tell me what happened?
- It doesn't work when people are consistently late, how can I support you in being on time?
- You were on time five times in the last two weeks, what worked on those days?

By dealing only with the facts, there is less chance of disempowering your employees or members and a greater likelihood that you will learn something to help you help them.

Whenever you are unsure what is data and what is assessment (it gets blurry sometimes), get a piece of blank paper, draw a line down the middle to make two columns. (See Figure 2). Differentiate between the data and your assessment. This will help you to get clear about what there is to discuss and the best way to approach the conversation.

Figure 2

<u>DATA</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT</u>
Sue late 5 times	Sue is inconsiderate
Took last cup of coffee	Sue doesn't care about others
Left pot dirty	Sue is not a good team member
Changes thermostat	

Little-Known Communication Strategy #3

Focus on What Works

There are always things that are working in your organization and things that aren't. Most people spend the vast majority of time and energy focusing on what doesn't work and trying to fix

it. Now this might elicit the response, "Of course I do that's how to improve" or "How else am I going to get things done?"

Focusing on what doesn't work actually slows down growth and development. It can keep you stuck and prevent you from moving forward. The bottom line is that the way we have been trained to think about change has been wrong.

It is not that you should ignore what doesn't work but be honest, how long have you been working on it? For most of us it has been years of trying to improve the same thing only to see incremental progress.

The first thing I want you to be clear about is this is not your fault. It's just a habitual way of thinking that we've all inherited. We learned to relate to others and ourselves as problems to be solved. We learned that life is a problem to be solved. Problem solving and focusing on what doesn't work drains us of energy. Seeing ourselves day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, as endless problems to be solved is exhausting. No wonder people have the Monday morning blues. A whole new week of problems to solve – woo hoo! No wonder people get disengaged.

When you only focus on what doesn't work it limits your thinking and your capacity to attain the results you really want.

What if there was another way to get what you want? Another way to achieve your goals? And what if it could be energizing, empowering and most importantly, more effective? What if you didn't always have to feel you were broken in need of repair?

Focusing on what works is another way to view life. Think about it, if you want to be rich, you would not study poor people. If you want to be thin, you would not study overweight people. Success is not found by studying failure and doing the opposite. Success has a texture and depth all its own.

The areas that are working about you and your organization are not by accident or luck or because the moon and the sun lined up just right. They work for reasons. When you discover what the reasons are you start to unleash the source of your power. Success leaves clues.

Our greatest potential for learning is in our areas of strength not in our weakness. When you recognize and acknowledge what works about you, your members and your organization you will begin to see everything differently, which will spark innovative thinking and whole new possibilities for action. This is the environment that allows the best in people to emerge.

Little-Known Communication BONUS Strategy

Develop Communication Skills of Employees/ Members

Why communication? What creates the culture of an organization? The nature of the conversations you are engaged in.

In order to create a sustainable, thriving organization it is crucial to develop the communication skills of your members and employees.

Everything can get resolved in communication. EVERYTHING!!

Make developing the communication skills of your members and employees part of the fabric of your organization rather than a one-time event. When your members feel confident in their ability to communicate they will be less likely to gossip or engage in other negative behaviors because they will deal with

the issues when they come up; petty issues get resolved with ease and there is more collaboration and teamwork.

As an added bonus, members will become more willing to take on leadership roles and responsibilities. Let's face it; most of us try to avoid the things we don't feel good about. We back away from taking on more responsibilities and problems unless we feel we can handle them.

When you have an expanded capacity to communicate effectively it strengthens your ability to handle situations that arise. In fact, most things don't occur as problems or obstacles anymore. They become just things to handle. Even failing becomes less scary because it's just an opportunity to learn and grow.

Conclusion:

Now that we have shared the **Three Little Known Communication Strategies Guaranteed to Breathe Life into Your Organization** you likely learned something new or were reminded of something that will help you to achieve your objectives of having a thriving, sustainable organization.

Given the nature of the work you do, doing more with less is adding enormous stress on everyone in your organization, especially the leaders. You do not need the added stress of interpersonal difficulties and conflict. Focusing on communication will enable your organization to transform its culture at all levels.

When you are aware of the **Three Little Known Communication Strategies Guaranteed to Breathe Life into Your Organization** you can begin to change the nature of the conversations in your organization, which will start you on a path to creating a magnetic organization where people will want to participate.

To take your organization to the next level contact us today. We are here to help you achieve a breakthrough in communication, leadership, teamwork, recruitment and retention, or improving the overall culture of your organization.

Please visit www.EMSLeadershipAcademy.com or call 1-888-330-8288 to find out how we can support you in positively impacting your organization.

About the Co-founders of EMS Leadership Academy



Best selling author and award winning trainer, Lisa Giruzzi is America's leading communication authority with more than 25 years experience helping people be more successful. To learn more visit www.EMSLeadershipAcademy.com



For more than 10 years, Robbie has served as a Paramedic & the President of a non-profit EMS organization in Upstate New York causing remarkable changes and measurable results working with Lisa on organizational change. To learn more visit www.EMSLeadershipAcademy.com