

COMMUNICATIONS COUNTDOWN

*six checkpoints for
getting and holding
the listener's attention*

The way to a listener's ear is through his attention. Effective teaching involves visual, aural or sensory communication, or a combination of all three. By observing established checkpoints along the way the teacher can determine whether or not he is getting through. By using the conversational countdowns the chances of getting and *holding* the listener's attention is increased a hundred fold. Use the following six checkpoints to gauge the effectiveness of your communication.

CHECKPOINT 1

Start by stating the program. More listeners are lost by this omission than this world dreams of.

Never start in the middle of the subject. In teaching, more than anywhere else, to begin at the beginning is to gain half the battle.

"Computers - And How They Work" has a better chance of success than "Computer Applications, Theory and Practice."

CHECKPOINT 2

Observe the ancient adage: start with the simple and work toward the difficult. By telling the listener something he may already know, you gain his confidence and put him into an agreeable mood. He advances more easily when you provide him with stepping stones.

Whenever you talk to another person you are competing for his attention, thus, deliberate repetition is required. Radio and TV commercials enhance their effectiveness through the repetition route.

CHECKPOINT 3

Your listener's attention wanders when he:

- a. Asks unnecessary questions
- b. Makes irrelevant comments
- c. Brings up arguments already answered.

Courtesy encourages communication. Respect the listener's feelings — accept irrelevancy and explore its purpose. Try to make the giving of information enjoyable. Express your appreciation for his interest. Let your listener vent his ideas and feelings. Give him time and attention. Share his views. You will establish a camaraderie with your listener. His natural objections to your point of view will diminish in a friendly atmosphere.

CHECKPOINT 4

Ask easy questions, but ones that cannot be answered yes or no. Get the listener involved by having him put the matter in his own terms. Preface your questions with "what about" or "how about" or "don't you think" or "suppose we."

CHECKPOINT 5

REPETITION. Repeat key words concerning what you are attempting to convey. Summarize frequently. Persuasion is not a forceful bending of your listener's will, nor is it usually achieved through emphatic voice, powerful argument or a manner that brooks no opposition.

Ideas are grasped by being *reached for* from within. Get the listener to reach for them. Draw him out.

CHECKPOINT 6

When the listener feels positive or takes a definite stand about a point he is not receptive. Get him to talk about his position. Gaps will appear in his argument when he hasn't worked the whole thing out. At these points he is likely to express doubts or uncertainty, or shows signs that he needs more information.

Now he is receptive. Now he is reaching for what you can give him. Now is the most favorable time to present ideas.

The listener is ready to absorb them.

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