Ten Tips for Better Communication

1. **Learn your communication style.** Your style defines the world you see. It's a scientifically validated assessment of your patterns of communicating. To learn your style, go to [www.GoStraightTalk.com](http://www.GoStraightTalk.com) and take the Straight Talk survey.

2. **Learn to identify the other communication styles.** There are sixteen styles, made up of combinations of four basic styles - Director, Expresser, Thinker, and Harmonizer. By observing for behavioral clues, you can figure out which styles people use. The Director focuses on tasks and responds assertively. The Harmonizer focuses on people and asks questions. To learn all the clues, read the [Book](http://www.GoStraightTalk.com) or explore the [Blog](http://www.GoStraightTalk.com).

3. **Practice "tuning" your style.** The best communicators know how to use all styles, depending on their audience. When a Director calls me on the phone, I tune my style to his by cutting to the bottom line and talking very succinctly. When a Harmonizer calls me, I spend at least four or five minutes making small talk before I broach any serious topic.

4. **Find a balance.** Straight Talk teaches us to find the natural balance between Emotional IQ and Analytical IQ and between advocacy and inquiry. In practical terms, if you're an Expresser, stop and think before you speak. If you're a Thinker, learn how to communicate more spontaneously, especially about your feelings. If you're a Director, spend more time inquiring how people really feel. If you're a Harmonizer, assert your own feelings more vigorously.
5. **Listen to hidden assumptions.** Every conversation is based on assumptions. Some are innocuous, like "Great day we're having, isn't it!" And some are harmful: "She doesn't have what it takes to manage this company." I remember proposing the launch of an on-line shopping service to a client 1994. The CEO said: "People want actual physical contact with an item before they purchase it." Because it went unchallenged, that assumption derailed a promising new venture.

6. **Make "undiscussables" discussable.** Taboo topics block progress and innovation. One large retail chain I worked with had a taboo about discussing monthly profits. As a result, frontline people didn't know whether the store's promotions had any impact. *Straight Talk* teaches people to get these Inner Scripts on the table in the form of a dilemma e.g. "My dilemma is this: I want to improve our sales performance, but I'm afraid some of my suggestions will be taken the wrong way by some people." Naming the negative response in advance, and posing it as a dilemma, inoculates people against having a defensive reaction.

7. **Develop your organization's "communication culture."**

Every group, team, organization, family, and nation has a communication culture. Director cultures are hard charging, inventive, and at times insensitive. Expresser cultures are filled with creative thinkers who are hard to pin down and may miss deadlines. Thinker cultures focus on detail and getting things done right, but may reject promising new ideas. And Harmonizer cultures are big on making sure people feel good, but also have a tendency to avoid conflict. It's good practice to understand your culture so you can take active steps to change it, or at least soften its effects.
8. **Stay humble. Stay curious.** Keep in mind that it's impossible to see everything clearly because of the way our brains work.¹ I worked with the CEO of a major network who didn't get this message. He hired talented people, but he wouldn't consult with them on key decisions, and after a few years they'd leave. That's no way to build an organization. Being humble is a tough lesson to learn. But it can transform an organization from one of fear to one of learning.

9. **Pay attention to your cheater meter.** Everyone engages in behaviors that build trust and erode trust. Make it a priority to change any of your behaviors that erode trust. A good place to begin is with your own cheater meter. If, for example, you think that other people are prone to goofing off and not putting in a full day's work - it's likely they perceive the same of you. It's odd, but your own cheater meter is likely to be tuned to the behaviors you're most sensitive to. This is likely to be the best mirror into yourself. Use it wisely!

10. **Use Straight Talk at home as well as work.** Everything that applies to good communication at work applies equally at home. Tuning your communications style to match your spouse's style will make you far more successful in getting what you want. Believe me!

The highly acclaimed [Straight Talk® book](#) details more techniques for improving communication, cutting through conflict, and creating successful organizations.

¹ Psychologists have shown that our brains are wired in such a way that we assume we are competent at most everything we do. This assumption of competence can trick anyone, anytime.