

## How to Communicate to Get Things Done by Susan Fletcher, Ph.D.

According to Hendrie Weisinger, Ph.D., author of *Emotional Intelligence at Work*, there are 4 communication levels:

- **Niceties.** This "Hi, how are you" level is where we acknowledge someone's presence.
- **Factual information.** We communicate facts with each other in a close-to-neutral manner.
- **Thoughts and ideas.** This level has greater vulnerability because, unlike straight facts, our thoughts and ideas can be rejected or dismissed as unworthy.
- **Feelings.** This is the highest level where we reveal intimate information about ourselves.

People in the [Smart Zone](#) can communicate with people at all levels. Here are Smart Moves for knowing when to shift your communication style:

- **The other person is in power or control.** If your boss or a client is communicating with you at the factual level, take caution in advancing to a higher level of communication. This could be considered inappropriate or insubordinate. [Watch this video to see my comments about communicating with your boss.](#)
- **You are in power or have control.** Use discretion when shifting to the feelings level because you can affect what people choose to tell you. Bruce Moeller, CEO of the \$23 million company DriveCam says, "By reacting emotionally you're shaping behavior. Even when I'm happy, I try to control my emotions. Otherwise, I would be telling people not to come to me unless it's with good news." Now that is a Smart Move.
- **An angry client or coworker.** Shift communication to a factual level. This helps to diminish the emotional intensity of the situation and to deal with the anger productively without escalating. [Watch how Tom Cruise does this](#) in the movie *A Few Good Men*. If someone is mad about not getting a promotion don't say, "I can tell you are really upset about this." Instead say, "Don't forget, your boss just appointed you to head up a new project."
- **An apathetic client or coworker.** Shift communication to a feeling level with open ended questions if someone is despondent or is providing one word responses during a conversation. Ask specific "what" and "how" questions to jump start the conversation.
- **Problem-solving.** Don't shift to the feelings level. Stay focused on the facts and offer thoughts and ideas. Watch out for mental theater. [Read what I have to say about mental theater in SUCCESS Magazine this month.](#)
- **You are too busy to talk.** Don't shift out of the niceties level if you are too busy to have a more meaningful conversation. If you are up to your eyeballs in a project when a co-worker calls or drops by your office to chat, then keep the conversation to an exchange of pleasantries. Instead of appearing curt or rude, say, "I really want to talk to you and I can come by your office as soon as I'm done with this report."

To motivate and inspire others communication has to be face-to-face. An email from President Kennedy telling us "not to ask what our country can do for us," would have fallen a little flat! Even though it's faster to communicate with hundreds of coworkers via email, remember that a single conversation is most effective and will keep you in the Smart Zone.

Susan Fletcher, Ph.D. is a psychologist, author and speaker who specializes in helping individuals, professionals and organizations apply strategies for fast improvement. Her Smart Zone™ strategies provide ways to be a top performer at work and home. To learn more about how to be in the Smart Zone please visit her website at [www.FletcherPhD.com](http://www.FletcherPhD.com) or contact Susan at (972) 612-1188 or by email at [drfletcher@fletcherphd.com](mailto:drfletcher@fletcherphd.com).