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### Effective Communication

#### - Sensory Messages: Speak to the Senses

Humans are highly-developed communications processors. When communication channels open and people speak the same language they send and receive messages to each other and correctly interpret those messages. Speaking the same language means more than speaking in your native tongue.

We receive and process messages by using our senses of sight (visual), hearing (auditory or sound), and touch, taste, and smell (kinesthetic or action/feeling). We use all of our senses to some degree (if none are impaired), yet each of us has a predominant sensory communications channel through which we process and internalize the information we receive. Some of us are primarily visual. Some are auditory. Others are action/feeling oriented. To turn this concept around to you as a message-sender, when you communicate with another person in the sensory language that matches their predominant sensory receptor and processor you build trust with and are most-effective in your communication with that person.

The following insights and suggestions will help you speak this language of sensory communication so that you are in tune to the same channel as that of the person to whom you communicate.



#### Cycle Therapy Column: On the Same Channel

Published in *The Meeting Professional Magazine*, the official publication of Meeting Professionals International (MPI).

A biker and a trucker are driving down the road. No, seriously. This is not an off-color joke. Both the biker and trucker have CB radios tuned to Channel 19. Both can clearly send and receive messages to each other because they are on the same radio frequency despite their disparate vehicles and radio manufacturers.

Each of us – every one of us different – has a channel through which we best receive and internalize messages. In various contexts these channels are referred to as learning styles, sensory receptors, neurolinguistic programming, or multiple intelligences. To communicate more clearly, determine the primary channel – visual (sight; eyes), auditory (sound; ears), or kinesthetic (touch; motion) – through which your message receiver processes messages. You can then transmit your message on that same channel to ensure the best reception.

Pay attention to the words a person uses to find their clearest channel. While the following examples are not hard-and-fast rules, they serve as clues to a person's primary mode of receiving and processing messages. Frequent use of terms such as "I see" and "I get the picture" indicate a person is likely a visual receiver. "I'm all ears" and "That sounds like a plan" suggest auditory reception while "I need to get a feel for that" and "I grasp the situation" typically come from kinesthetic receivers.

Once you learn the other person's primary channel, send your message on the same channel. "Let me show you" works best for visual; "I'll tell you this" works best for auditory; and "Wrap your arms around this idea" hits home for kinesthetic receivers. Tune into others' channels and you'll find they tune into your messages more clearly.

Bonus gift: Learn more about this topic at:  
 - <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/vak.html> (a short self-assessment).

**The Language of Sensory Communication**



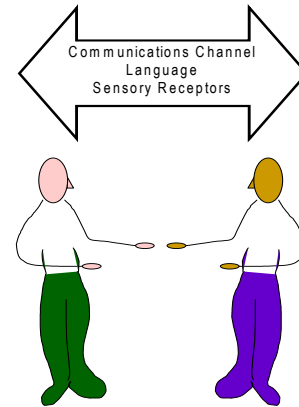
You have a matter of seconds to determine the most-likely predominant sensory receptor of the person with whom you are communicating. By closely observing the other person’s body language and listening to their words you can pick up clues to help you make such a determination.

Use words that “reach” a person’s predominant sensory channel. The right words help you get your message across to others most effectively. Strong indicators for a person’s predominant sensory receptor are the words they themselves use.

For example:

- **Visual (seeing)** receptors use phrases such as:

“I see what you mean.”  
 “Look! We could...”  
 “That looks good.”  
 “This is what I envision.”  
 “Mmm. That’s crystal clear to me.”  
 “Aren’t you a sight for sore eyes.”  
 “I get the picture!”  
 “That’s pretty clear cut in my mind’s eye.”



- **Auditory (hearing)** receptors use phrases such as:

“I hear you.”  
 “That sounds good to me.”  
 “Listen, we could...”  
 “There’s too much noise (too busy). I can’t deal with it right now.”  
 “I’m all ears.”  
 “I think we need to get in tune with each other before continuing with negotiations.”  
 “Will you describe, in detail, the points you want to make?”  
 “Hmmm, I think that name rings a bell.”

- **Kinesthetic (tactile, touch, smell, taste)** receptors use phrases such as:

“I grasped that.”  
 “Hold on! We could...”  
 “I like the feel of that.”  
 “Something doesn’t feel right about that.”  
 “What a delicious idea!”  
 “I’m on the scent now.”  
 “Hmmm. Something smells suspicious.”  
 “I need to get a sense of where we are going with this.”  
 “Let’s touch base in a couple of days.”  
 “What’s your experience with the product?”

**Tuning to the Same Channels**

The following chart notes common signals indicative of the three types of sensory communicators and offers suggested ways in which to communicate on the same channel. These indicators are generalizations; place individuals into categories with caution. As with most behavioral indicators, you will encounter exceptions to the rules.

“What we say is important for in most cases the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”  
 (Jim Beggs)

“What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say.” (Ralph Waldo Emerson – 1803-1882)

“And these .. these phrases you keep speaking in. They don’t make any sense.”  
 “Ah, you seek meaning?”  
 “Yes.”  
 “Then listen to the music, **not** the song.”  
 (Kosh and Talia Winters in Babylon 5 – Deathwalker Television Episode)



Use this chart as a guideline to sensitize yourself to the sensory styles of the people with whom you communicate. Listen and observe people closely. Then communicate in a manner that most-closely mirrors their style in order to win their trust and get your messages across more clearly.

	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
<b>Eye movements</b>	Frequently looks up. Allows eyes to pan from left to right. Blinks frequently. Closes the eyes. Glassy or unfocused look.	Occasionally looks left and down.	Frequently looks down and to the right.
<b>Strong indicators of predominant style</b>	"I <u>see</u> what you mean." " <u>Look!</u> We could..." "That <u>looks</u> good." "This is what I <u>envision</u> ."	"I <u>hear</u> you." "That <u>sounds</u> good to me." " <u>Listen</u> , we could..." "There's too much <u>noise</u> (too busy). I can't deal with it right now."	"I <u>grasped</u> that." " <u>Hold on!</u> We could..." "Something doesn't <u>feel</u> right about that." "I like the <u>feel</u> of that." "I'm on the <u>scent</u> now." "What a delicious idea!" "Hmmm. That smells suspicious."
<b>Words frequently used by predominant style</b>	An eyeful. Analyze. Angle. Appears. Aspect. Beyond a shadow of a doubt.	Amplify. Articulate. Audible. Announce. Ask. Talk to much.	Active. Affected. Bearable. Boils down to. Callous. Fast track. Washed up.
<b>Voice, breathing, body language, speech rate</b>	Breathes high up in the chest. Has a high-pitched tone of voice. Speaks in rapid bursts.	Touches face. Taps chin. Rubs cheeks. Adapts the "telephone position with hands." Speaks in an even, pleasant voice. Hums, whistles, makes clicking sounds.	Breathes fully and deeply. Uses gestures when speaking. Speaks somewhat slowly. Has low, resonant voice. Frequently touches clothing or body.
<b>Words to use with predominant style</b>	Invite this person to use their "mind's eye". "Imagine." "Can you see?" "Picture..."	Suggest this person tunes into what others say. "They talk about..." "She complimented you on..." "It says here that..." "Listen to the way it sounds."	"Experience..." "On the go." "A mover and shaker." "Where the action is." "Keep your eye on the ball (shoulder to the wheel; foot in the door)" "Mind your manners." "It's touching." "Go for it (do it)."
<b>Supporting information</b>	Use visual aids liberally (photos, video, pictures, graphs, brochures, color)	Use quotations. Suggest calling to contact.	Reveals action-oriented hobbies and interests. Volunteer-oriented. Involve physically whenever possible. Appeal to feelings or results.
<b>Avoid</b>	Using sound-oriented or feeling-oriented words.	Using visual-oriented or feeling-oriented words.	Not having some sort of hands-on, tactile, or emotional experience.



**Word Choice: Sense Words**

These are examples of words to use in your speaking and writing that appeal most-favorably to people who best receive messages through the corresponding predominant sensory receptor.

**Sight/Appearance**

alert	colorful	elegant	graceful	nappy	skinny
blinding	contoured	filthy	grotesque	narrow	smoggy
bright	crinkled	flat	hazy	rotund	sparkling
brilliant	crowded	fluffy	hollow	pale	spotless
broad	crystalline	foggy	homely	quaint	square
blushing	curved	fuzzy	lithe	shadowy	steep
chubby	deep	glamorous	low	shady	stormy
clean	dim	gleaming	misty	sheer	straight
clear	distinct	glistening	muddy	shiny	unsightly
cloudy	dull	glowing	murky	shallow	wizened

**Smell and Taste**

acid	delicious	nutty	salty	stale	tangy
antiseptic	fragrant	peppery	savory	sticky	tart
bitter	fresh	putrid	smoky	strong	tasty
choking	juicy	ripe	sour	stuffy	tasteless
clean	medicinal	rotten	spicy	sweet	

**Sound**

bang	faint	husky	raspy	snort	thunderous
booming	groan	loud	resonant	soft	tinkle
buzz	growl	melodic	screaming	splash	voiceless
clatter	harsh	moan	screech	squeak	wail
crash	hiss	mute	shrill	squeal	whine
crying	hoarse	noisy	silent	thud	whispered
deafening	hushed	quiet	snarl	thump	

**Touch**

boiling	curly	frosty	melted	slick	tener
breezy	damp	fuzzy	plastic	slimy	tight
bumpy	dirty	goeey	prickly	slippery	uneven
chilly	dry	greasy	rainy	slushy	wet
cold	dusty	grubby	rough	smooth	wet
cool	filthy	hard	sandpapery	soft	wooden
creepy	fluffy	hot	shaggy	solid	yielding
crisp	flaky	icy	sharp	sticky	
cuddly	fluttering	loose	silky	stinging	

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