

Communication Technology Doesn't Replace Communication Skill!

By JoJo Tabares

My generation has gone from ABC, NBC, and CBS to cable TV, CD-ROMs, and DVDs. We have lived through the biggest technological advancements in history. We can now communicate with people around the world through cell phones, email, voicemail, videomail . . . and we can see political events unfolding as they happen! The Internet wasn't fast enough for us, so we now have DSL and cable that are 50 times faster than the modems of two years ago! Computers weren't portable enough, so we now have laptops and PDAs. The technological world is obsessed with making communication technology faster, smaller, and more powerful.

With so many ways to communicate, we are the most-connected society that ever lived! So . . . what's the name of your neighbor who lives three houses down from you? When was the last time you sat around the dinner table and had a good, old-fashioned conversation? How often do you feel ill-prepared to discuss important issues with your children? Is there a family member or business associate you are avoiding because you don't know how to handle a delicate situation? How many times have you felt ineffective in getting your point across to others?

Did you know that 87% of what you do all day is communication-related? Or that only 43% of people surveyed said they are effective communicators? Effective communication is a dying art. Know how I know? Call any company and see how fast you can reach a live body. When you get one, how often are you frustrated with the customer service you receive?

Here are a few statistics you might want to consider:

- Companies with the highest levels of effective communication experienced a 26% total return to shareholders from 1998-2002, compared to a -15% return experienced by firms that communicate least effectively according to a study done in 2004.
- Harvard University studied the success characteristics of a large group of corporate leaders comprised of board chairmen, presidents, and chief executive officers of Fortune 500 companies. The number one reason they listed for their own success was the ability to get along well with people. The number two reason was the ability to communicate effectively.
- The American Medical Association now suggests that new doctors have training in communication skills.
- According to the National Association of Colleges, 1000 human resource managers ranked preferred skills for being hired as follows: 1.) Oral communication skills, 2.) Written communication skills, and 3.) Listening (which is also a communication skill).

- *Harvard Business Review* readers rated "the ability to communicate" over ambition, education, and a willingness to work hard as the reason an employee would be "promotable."
- The National Communication Association commissioned a survey in 1998 in which the number-one reason cited for a marriage to fail was lack of effective communication.
- In a study conducted by the National Communication Association in 2001, "Students with ineffective listening skills fail to absorb much of the material to which they are exposed. Their problems are intensified when they respond inappropriately because of poor speaking skills." Students typically remember only 25% of what they hear in class after 48 hours. Numerous studies indicate our listening memory range to be 20-30%. However, you need to remember at least 70% to pass the test! Students who ask questions and discuss ideas in class learn more because studies show that questions start the thinking process and questions asked orally can double your ability to remember the information. Further, if you interact in a small group as you discuss the learning points, your understanding of the concepts increases according to the National Research Council.
- The NCA also found that "Youngsters with poor communication skills are sometimes viewed as less attractive by their peers and enjoy fewer friendships. Antisocial and violent behavior often accompany or occur with underdeveloped social and conflict-management skills."

Communication skills are even more important today because the world is a much smaller place. Technology allows us to communicate with people of different faiths and who have different worldviews. We can no longer assume that those we communicate with see things the way we do, and it takes a little more skill to discuss the issues that are important to us all.

Everything we say and do communicates something to those around us. It is not enough to have the technology to communicate to people across the world from us; it is also imperative that we learn to communicate effectively! Those who do enjoy higher grades, deeper friendships, longer marriages, more successful careers, and higher incomes, as well as general happiness.

Biographical Information

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JoJo Tabares holds a degree in speech communication, but it is her humorous approach to communication skills which has made her a highly sought-after Christian speaker and writer. Her articles appear in homeschool publications, such as Homeschool Enrichment Magazine and The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine, which also endorses her Say What You Mean curricula. You can also find JoJo on Web sites such as Crosswalk.com and Dr.Laura.com. For more

information on communication FUNDamentals and Christian-based communication skills for the whole family, please visit <http://www.ArtofEloquence.com/>.