

## **Organize Your Communication**

By JoJo Tabares

We all know that organizing your day will increase your productivity. It allows you to keep a record of things that you need to do and prioritize them to make better use of your time. It keeps you on track and focused. A planner is an essential tool for the busy woman whether she has a business, a career, or an active household!

But how many times have you had to return a phone call and forgot to mention an important point? Have you ever had a hard time formulating your thoughts in a letter? Did you ever email anyone and come to find out that they didn't quite understand what you were asking? And then, how much of your time was spent trying to clear up that communication?

We all know that effective communication is important, but what does that really mean in practical terms for busy women? Here are some tips that I use to help me make the most out of my communication.

### **1. Phone Calls**

Before you dial that number, make some notes on a piece of paper to remind you of the points you wish to address. Don't write complete sentences, but rather write a bullet list so that it is easy to refer to while you are talking.

Write the person's name at the top, and if this call is for business, some notes about that person that you remember. Have you ever called someone and, while it was ringing, forgot who you were calling? This technique helps with those "senior moments." Good communicators are great listeners, and your notes can help you communicate that you were listening to her when she mentioned that her Aunt Sally was in the hospital last week. How? Because you will remember to ask how Aunt Sally is doing!

### **2. Use an Outline**

Before you write anything (a letter, an email, a report, or an article), you must organize your thoughts. The best way to do this is to use an outline. This ensures that your thoughts are complete, presented in a logical order, and are easy to understand before you begin to write. You will notice that the writing goes much more smoothly when you do this too—an added bonus for those of you who dislike writing as much as I do!

I can always tell when someone didn't organize her thoughts before hitting the keyboard or picking up that pencil, because her communication is a jumble of disjointed ideas that hits you from all angles and leaves you wondering.

A confused mind will not act. If you have confused your Uncle Edward, he might not understand that you want him to watch the kids next Tuesday night. If you have confused your boss, she may not give you that project or that corner office you were trying to ask for. And if you confuse your customer, he will not buy from you!

### **3. Email**

Now that you have organized your thoughts, make your email posts easier to read by organizing their appearance! Remember that we live in a microwave society. People don't want to read a 6000-word essay on what you have done today . . . especially if it is all one big paragraph!

- Keep in mind to whom your email is going. If it is to an entire group of people, make sure that this is something you wish to release to the general population. As you type, keep in mind that the group may be diverse in their religious or political beliefs, so tailor your message appropriately so you can say what you mean!
- Remember that your words are the only things your audience will have to help them understand what you are trying to say. They cannot see your smiling face or hear your sweet voice to help them understand where you are coming from. Choose your words wisely.
- Make each new thought a new paragraph.
- Use bullets or numbers in list format to make it easier for people to scan—because they will scan!
- Watch your spelling, grammar, and punctuation to make sure that you are not asking your reader to strain a brain cell trying to figure out what that word is.
- Read over your message before you hit the send button to make sure that you haven't missed something that might make your communication confusing or that doesn't represent the tone you wanted your message to have.

### **4. Presentations**

It is generally acceptable to carry notes or index cards with you when you are making a presentation of almost any sort. What is not acceptable is to read it verbatim while holding the cards up in front of you, obscuring your face. Organize yourself for your presentation.

- Know your audience. Consider what they value most and what they would like to know about your topic before you begin. Tailor your presentation to the average audience member, but leave room for the feelings and values of the others to whom you will be speaking.

- Make sure that your notes are written like we talked about earlier for your phone conversations. Don't write complete sentences or you will be tempted to read them instead of refer to them.
- If you use index cards, please number them. In case you accidentally drop them, you can quickly re-order them and go on with your presentation.
- Prepare for your presentation by going over it several times until you become familiar with the flow without having to refer much to your notes.
- Make sure you have any props or charts ready beforehand and that you have worked with them during your preparation. Many is the time a presenter rushed out the door without the manuals he was going to hand out during the meeting or found that he had a hard time working with the 3-foot by 3-foot rice paper poster he planned on standing up on the table during his talk.
- Walk the room. If you are unfamiliar with the room in which you will be speaking, arrive a few minutes early and walk through it to get a feel for how you will be presenting. Does it have a microphone? Does it need one?

A little organization and preparation go a long way toward making your communication more clear! It will be less stressful for you, less frustrating for your audience, and will give you the best chance overall to say what you mean. Happy communicating!

### **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/>.*