



Message Not Received: Why Business Communication Is Broken and How to Fix It

Phil Simon

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Winner, 2015 Axiom Award for Best Networking/Communications Book

George Bernard Shaw once famously said, "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

Although he died in 1950, Shaw's words live on, especially in the business world. Far too many executives, salespeople, consultants, and everyday employees suck at communicating. Some think that they're speaking and writing effectively when they drop ostensibly sophisticated terms like paradigm shift, synergy, net-net, form factor, and optics.

No doubt that you know the type. (Maybe you're even one of them and don't realize it.) These are the folks who regularly rely upon obscure acronyms, technobabble, jargon, and buzzwords when plain English would suffice just fine. They constantly invent new tech-laden words, bastardize others, and turn nouns into verbs. They ignore their audiences, oblivious to the context of their words. In other words, they talk without speaking.

If bad business communication is a disease, the prevalence of hackneyed and utterly meaningless terms is just one of its major causes. Aside from using confusing language, many corporate folks depend almost exclusively on a single communications vehicle: e-mail. In the process, they actively resist new, powerful, and truly collaborative tools specifically designed to make people work and communicate better.

What's the net effect of this near-pervasive failure to effectively communicate while at work? The precise monetary figure is impossible to quantify. At the same time, though, it cannot be overstated. At a minimum, communication breakdowns are directly responsible for myriad inefficiencies, duplicate efforts, ineffectual campaigns, project failures, largely avoidable gaffes, internal political squabbles, and forgone business opportunities.

If that seems a bit lofty and abstract, then consider the following real-world scenarios. Think about how many misunderstandings could have been averted at your organization if two colleagues had simply engaged in a five-minute in-person conversation or videoconference over Skype. Ask yourself how many technical problems could have been solved with a quick phone call and a simple screen-sharing session. Have you ever missed a truly critical e-mail because it was hidden in your never-ending inbox? Have you even been unable to your jobs because key documents languished in someone's inbox or on someone's hard drive? How many software vendors have lost a potential sale because the prospective client couldn't or didn't understand what your company is selling?

Fortunately, business communication need not suffer from antiquated tools and a commensurate mind-set. In *Message Not Received*, award-winning author Phil Simon demonstrates how intelligent professionals and organizations are embracing simpler language and new technologies to communicate in a much more straightforward and effective manner. No theoretical text, Simon takes us on a journey, stopping at progressive companies like Klick Health, Sidecar, and PR 20/20 along the way.

Message Not Received examines how we communicate, use, and often misuse language and technology at work. It's high time to reexamine not only what we say while we're on the clock, but how we say it.

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