

Bridge the Communication Gap

With LIFO® Techniques for Influencing Key People

Stuart Atkins, Ph.D.

The Golden Rule is a timeless moral precept: “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” This principle has great common-sense appeal, but ironically it doesn’t work very well as an effective guide to communication. The problem is that not everybody wants to be treated the same way—and most likely, *not our way!*

The key to effective communication is recognizing what is important to other people and communicating the way *they prefer*. This is the essence of the New Golden Rule: Do unto others as they want to be done unto.

Others open up to us when we address what is important to *them*—not us. If we focus on things that aren’t important to them, they are likely to shut us out. And continuing to “talk at” people who are closed to communication generates resistance that makes it even more difficult to get through.

Everyone has a guiding philosophy of life. They may not be able to put it into words—but it’s there. This philosophy gives them a special way of looking at the world and a special set of key questions that they want answered when communicating with others.

Despite our diversity, there are only four basic ways of communicating, four channels to get through and get action from others.

Four Communication Channels

Imagine yourself in front of your TV set. You’re waiting for your favorite TV show on Channel 2. It is time for it to begin, but a different program comes on. It’s not long before you’re feeling disappointed and irritated. Suddenly you remember, it’s on Channel 4! You switch over and become more relaxed as the program’s familiar format unfolds.

**THE NEW GOLDEN RULE:
Do unto others as they want
to be done unto.**

Each communication channel has its own familiar format, as illustrated on the following page.

We usually send our communications over our favorite channel, assuming other people are interested in the same things we are. But it does no good to transmit a message on Channel 4 to someone who is watching on Channel 2. We need to communicate on each other’s channels.



Dr. Stuart Atkins is the principal author of the Life Orientations® Survey, originator of LIFO® Training and author of The Name of Your Game and Life in the Stress Lane. He has taught at UCLA, USC, Caltech, AMA, and the NTL Institute of Applied Behavioral Science.

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Basic life questions for each channel remain uppermost in our minds regardless of the subject matter being presented to us. We stay “tuned in” if people answer these questions. If these questions are not answered early in the communication, we experience tension and interference—static in the communication. That makes it difficult to get through to us.

When we answer their key questions, people are more receptive, more “tuned in.”

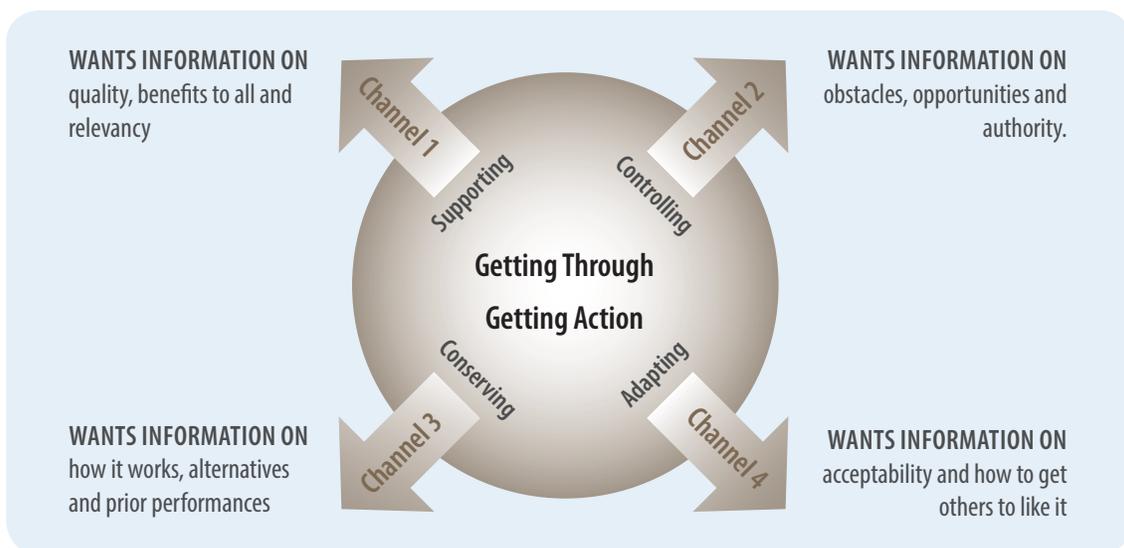
Supporting Channel	Controlling Channel
Will it benefit all?	Who is in control?
Is it the best?	What are the opportunities?
Can I help?	What’s the bottom line?
Is it fair?	What’s next?

Conserving Channel	Adapting Channel
What are the trade-offs?	Will it gain acceptance?
How does it work?	What are people’s opinions?
Who does what?	Is it disruptive?
Can we sample?	Can it be changed?

Getting Through & Getting Action

When others prefer the same communication channel we do, our communication gets through easily. We get their attention and keep it. They are more likely to be interested in what we say, agree with our conclusions, and support our recommendations. It’s easy to get through because we are answering the key questions that are uppermost in their minds.

Each channel represents a way of describing people, problems, and events—and a different set of key questions. Since there are four basic communication



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channels, the odds are three-to-one against our sending and receiving on the same channel.

Three out of four times we could be sending on the wrong channel. No wonder we don't get through. The other person is asking one set of questions while we are busy answering another!

It is possible that in our family circle, or among our co-workers, we all prefer the same communication channel. It does happen. More than likely, however, there are several key people in our lives who prefer other channels.

This is where the trouble lies, where we can't get through no matter how hard we try. In these "problem" relationships we often find that the more effort we put into broadcasting over our channel, the *less* it seems to get through. The solution could be as simple as switching our broadcast frequency—instead of asking others to tune in to *our* channel, we send our message on *their* channels.

We spend our time and energy insisting, "Impossible! There is no way to get through to these people. I've tried for years and it can't be done." Yet how freeing it would be to discover it's simply a matter of answering the key questions that are uppermost in *their* minds, not ours. Then we *can* reach those people who don't seem to be "on the same wavelength."

People can learn how to recognize other people's preferred channels of communication and answer their key questions.

A Case History

Jim Huntington works as a production coordinator for a large manufacturing company. He is energized by taking action on many projects at the same time and is not very interested in the details. He wants to know who is in charge of each project, when they will be

done, and what's next. After reviewing a project report, he will often say to the project manager, "Just give me the bottom line." He has a strong preference for what we call the *Controlling* communication channel.

Jim's immediate supervisor, Allison Terry, takes a different approach most of the time. She has a fine eye for detail, likes to gather as many facts as she can before making decisions, and expects to see projects broken into multiple phases that can be implemented a step at a time, with back-up alternatives in case things don't turn out as expected. She has a strong preference for what we call the *Conserving* communication channel.

Before learning some new LIFO communication skills, Jim often found his meetings with Allison did not go very well. He would present a brief status report on all his projects, listing the achievements, key problems, and what needed to be done to do to solve the problems.

He assumed Allison would be pleased by his "take charge" attitude, his obvious competence, and his focus on end results. However, Allison was usually *not* pleased, and he was often caught off guard by her demands for more information about specific projects and her requests for multiple "what if" scenarios and options that she could test out.

Once he understood that Allison preferred the Conserving channel, he found it was relatively easy to get her attention and get action. It just took a little effort and practice to make sure that he answered the key questions that were uppermost in her mind. He learned to give her plenty of information, describe projects in terms of logical phases and test runs, to compare alternatives, and to outline clearly who does what and when.

Four Ways to Get a Raise

Let's say you want to ask your boss for a raise. Here are four ways to do it, depending on the communication channel your boss tunes in to.

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The concepts and skills described in this article are based on the LIFO® Method, which have been used by Fortune 500 companies, small businesses, government, hospitals, churches, schools, and universities.

Channel 1: Supporting

"All the people in our group are putting out 110 percent. They're the hardest working group I've had the privilege to work with. I don't think you'll find more dedicated and loyal people. I know it's immodest, but I include myself in those comments. We try harder, and the high standards we have maintained prove it. We've never cut corners to excel."

Channel 2: Controlling

"Let me tell you what I accomplished over the last six months.... And here are my plans for the next six months.... The bottom line is, it will definitely move us ahead. It's a great opportunity. We'll be the first. We'll have the jump on everybody."

Channel 3: Conserving

"I've checked out salary ranges in comparable organizations. Here's the top, middle, and bottom of the range. I'm just below the middle. Of course titles vary, so I made sure I was comparing similar responsibilities. Before rushing into a decision, let me explain how we can build on my past accomplishments.... And here are some new ideas I want to try, but I won't go ahead until I have more history from trial programs in other organizations."

Channel 4: Adapting

"All our projects are running smoothly. We haven't made a single embarrassing mistake in a long while. In fact, we've cut down on the confusion between our group and the others. We were flattered when some of them asked us to help install a similar system. As a result, there are virtually no more hassles between us. And another thing about our system that they like is the time they save. They'll be able to try out some new ideas, talk things out, and calm any troubled waters!"

These four examples show how to communicate on different channels. Notice that you **don't have to change yourself** or become like the boss. Rather, you need only to emphasize the relevant information to match your boss's communication channel.

How to Get Started with LIFO Communication Training

Two Convenient Methods

Certification Seminar. Attend a two-day certification seminar with a Master LIFO Trainer demonstrating all the LIFO Training techniques. Offered as a public course or in-house at your location.

Guided Self-Study with Coaching. Complete the certification program at your own place and at your own pace under the guidance of a Master LIFO Trainer. Includes a Self-Study Guide, Trainer's Manual, and all the learning materials you need to conduct your first pilot session. 