



## Managing the Communication Situation

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One communication mistake we all make from time to time is: failing to manage the **situation**. We forget that the situation is one of the key communication elements, just like tone of voice and body language. All communication settings and times are not created equal. So, how can we better manage the important situations we face every day?

### Here are the three phases of situation management:

**Phase one:** Someone has asked a complex question OR you discover the need to communicate something important. Be clear about your objective. What do you want to happen? What will work best to help you achieve that outcome? Ask yourself whether this requires an immediate response or would be better dealt with after you have more time to think it through.

**Phase two:** If someone has put you on the spot, whether deliberately or not, communicate the need for delay with a positive spin, using **Positive Power**<sup>™</sup> Lines such as:

*Give me a chance to come back to you with another solution (or more information).*

*That's a good question! Let me check and find out.*

*I'll get back to you on that. I want to look into it further and right now I'm focused on...*

*I don't know the answer to that right now, but will get back to you. Is Monday afternoon or Tuesday morning better for you?*

### Phase three: Prepare!

Determine the best setting, time and approach. For example, would it be to your benefit to schedule this meeting in the morning or afternoon? Where should you meet? For example, if you are coaching an employee, going to the employee's desk lowers the intimidation factor. If you are disciplining an employee for a serious offense, you will probably want to have a witness present and to have the meeting in your office. The employee should sit across from you, with your desk in between. You might even stand and walk toward the employee at some point.

Determine what to say and how to say it. If the information is detailed, write out your ideas, practice and follow your notes. Consider using visual aids to support your ideas, focus attention, clarify and motivate. By doing this, you avoid being long-winded because you can bullet point your ideas—bottom-lining what you need to get across. You can then support your ideas with written materials.

Situation management makes you look good, helps you to think on your feet and, most importantly, it increases your overall effectiveness. You won't make as many careless remarks, you won't create as many misunderstandings and, though it takes more preparation time, you will save a great deal of time overall by making communication more targeted, accurate and to the point. The next time you get into a sticky communication situation, consider whether or not you might have managed the situation better.

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*Unleashing the Communication Potential of Individuals and Organizations.*<sup>™</sup>