

# COMMUNICATIONS IN THE FOOD AND DAIRY FIELD<sup>1</sup>

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The importance of communications may be comprehended by the fact that nearly every major organization has a full complement of staff to handle the subject and every college and University throughout North America offers undergraduate course work and many institutions teach graduate courses in the communication arts. It was rather surprising how the College of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan began teaching in this field. A questionnaire sent to the graduates from the College asked several pertinent questions on how course content could be improved to meet the needs in their particular area. Under the additional remarks column nearly 70 percent of the replies stated that although the material was correctly presented and vast quantities of information was absorbed, no attempt had been made to tell or show the student how to disseminate or communicate this vast wealth of knowledge to others. To surmount this oversight all freshmen must take a compulsory course designed to improve their communication technique.

Communications media are a phenomena of the twentieth century. However, their roots are to be found in the origin of language itself. Man learned to communicate, before he became civilized and the art of communication therefore predates civilization. When we speak of communications the whole gamut must be considered — press, radio, television, news-reels, movies, telegraph, telephone, cinemascope, house organs, scientific and popular magazines, other advertising media, public platform, discussion groups; even the "hucksters" are included.

When one mentions communications they really mean public relations since it inevitably involves communication with the people who comprise the various publics. However, it is a paradox that, as the number of communication media has increased and as the media themselves have vastly improved, communication has become more difficult. Since the means of communication exist, it must be the use of those means that is at fault.

Because of the breadth of the subject, it is necessary to limit this discussion to the communication of ideas by means of words.

There are four questions which will help to make clear the general problem of communication of ideas.

If we apply them to specific cases in everyday life we shall find that we can make our thoughts known clearly so as to persuade people to see events and ideas from our point of view.

1. What is it we wish to communicate (We must have it clear in our own minds).

2. To whom (It is childish to try to score a bull's eye by aiming in the general direction of the target).

3. What is the best medium of communications (writing, speaking, photographs, charts, movies, T.V., radio, etc.).

4. What will best carry our message to the audience. (In the food and dairy field it is probably direct communication).

If anyone doubts the difficulty in communication of ideas by words, try to teach your son without active demonstration how to knot his tie. Or to bring it closer to home let me demonstrate a technique learned from an old friend of many of us, namely Dr. W. H. Haskell of Wisconsin. He was discussing cleaning and wanted to impress the group with the fact of "Don't tell them, show them". He set the scene by stating the audience would consider him an aborigine who had never seen a suit coat and the audience were to tell him how to put on the coat. The results were hilarious but it proved the point that, often you must work with the person and not just talk. As a matter of fact we should all entertain a new concept of Public Relations, which is; "Nine-tenths doing and one-tenth talking". Too many talk public relations and do nothing about it.

Successful public relations are essentially the results of a complicated interplay of virtues and principles. One of the cardinal principles in dealing with people is to show enthusiasm. Walter P. Chrysler, when asked to give the secret of success, listed various qualities such as capacity, energy, etc., but added that the real secret was enthusiasm. Right here is the big reason why thousands of people hit their high water mark at the age of thirty-five and recede — they can "do their work with their eyes shut" and that is the way they do it. They either never had or have lost the driving force of enthusiasm. Actually, the majority of people only use about 10 percent of their mental capacity because it has not been enthusiastically promoted. If we promote our ideas in the field, plant or laboratory in an enthusiastic way it will be possible to increase the mental capacity of all around us and as a result product improvement, in which we are all interested, will follow.

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When in New York a few years ago I was fortunate in studying under one of the foremost public relations men in the country. In discussing the phase of how to communicate, he presented four cards with a letter on each card ICCM and said "If you wish to get your message across you must be Interesting, Clear, Convincing and the subject material Memorable.

In looking at the word COMMUNICATIONS we note these letters are present and in addition there are several other attributes that one should possess such as being orderly, methodical, upright, non-partisan, intelligent, active, tactful, objective, non-conformist and last but not least sincere.

## I C C M

CLEAR	CONVINCING
Orderly	Active
MEMORABLE	Tactful
Methodical	INTERESTING
Upright	Objective
Nonpartisan	Nonconformist
Intelligent	Sincere

Those who are students of "semantics" may wish to use other symbols (words) but anyone who deals in dissemination of statements to the public would do well to understand the science of semantics in the communication process, for words loosely used can be open to many and varied interpretations or misinterpretations. The great General Von Moltke at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War said to his officers, "Remember gentlemen, any order that can be misunderstood will be misunderstood". Further Anatole France remarked that there are three requisites in all good communications. The first is clarity, the second is clarity and the third is — clarity. Words either written or spoken are no use except to convey ideas. In this fast moving age of science and technology we have seen our language grow and add its quota of new words and phrases peculiar to our time. In 1846 the English dictionary contained only 47,000 words, today it includes almost half a million, an increase of 12 new words a day. Milton knew 10,000 words, Shakespeare knew 15,000; the Bible only contains 5000 different words. In other words if we wish to be understood, keep our language simple.

It is quite possible that Albert Szent-Gyorgyi was prompted to write his article on "The Development of Mind and Science are not in Balance" due to the complexity of semantics. After all, whatever man does, he must first do in his mind. The machinery of the mind is the brain, and any machine can only do what it is made to do. Consequently, if we want to understand ourselves and others, we must understand what sort of machine our brain is. Primarily, the brain is an organ of survival. It was designed

by nature to search for food, shelter, clothing, to gain advantage — before addressing itself in the pursuit of truth. Hence most human brains are unable to distinguish between truth and advantage, and accept as truth that which is only advantage. Simultaneously, we produce thoughts and arguments which justify our feelings and dealings; for instance the majority of politicians today are devoting their brain power less to the next generation than to the next election!

An understanding of how the brain works is a must for all in the public relations field because it gives us the necessary background in the strategy of working with people. To illustrate this, we may use the example of one of my former students. For twelve years he was employed by a Department of Public Health in the dairy field. Two years ago he joined a large dairy organization in charge of quality control (both farm and finished product). At his first briefing the manager handed him a copy of Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People." His wife laughed at him for reading it but not long after he confessed to me that it was the most important book in his library. He wished he had started using it fourteen years ago, because now he was making real progress with his producers, — they no longer let the dog off the leash or out the back door when they saw his car coming up the lane! The principles outlined in the book, when practiced sincerely, often make the difference between success and failure. Further, if King George III of England had not been so pig-headed on that fateful day of December 16, 1773 (Boston Tea Party) we Canadians might still have for a colony that great country south of the 49th parallel! I often wonder when we are in a position to wield a big stick if we forget our public relations.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Nature never rhymes her children nor makes two men alike." Thus to be effective in our Public Relations we must admit two truths: (a) We are all different, and (b) We are all acting and reacting in different environments. When we realize these truths, we are inclined to begin understanding people and to study them.

We all realize that nothing is pure white or pure black. Many of us who have certain prejudices must accustom ourselves to thinking in degrees of black and white, goodness and badness, poisonous and wholesome. K. S. Keys in his book "How to Develop Your Thinking Ability" refers to a chemical called phenyl-thiocarbimide, the tolerance chemical. One out of five finds it tasteless, 65 percent find it bitter, 5 percent call it sour, 2 percent insist that it is sweet and 5 percent are sure it is salty. Others call it something else. There is no one answer on which people can agree. Knowing this, we realize the

futility of argument concerning the taste of the chemical, and we shall not be prejudiced against friends whose opinions differ from ours. The Royal Bank of Canada, our major financial institution, felt so strongly about the subject of prejudice that they devoted an entire monthly newsletter to the subject.

Frequently one finds that prejudice creeps into highly specialized personnel and it sometimes reduces their ability to contribute as much as they are capable of doing. Rather than be highly specialized let's be more generalized and practical. For example Dr. Frantz of our city told me of the strange case of a young man who had a ringing in his ears and his eyes were bugging out. When sent to a specialist and thoroughly examined it was concluded he had a rare tropical disease and was given a maximum of six months to live. Thus he decided to spend some money on a complete new outfit. Finally he got down to shirts and said to the clerk, "Give me half a dozen size 14 shirts." The clerk looked, then measured him and said "If you wear a size 14 it will make your ears ring and your eyes bug out! Buy a 15." Sometimes a little practical background helps.

Despite the resources of our language for clarity, distinctive expression and minute differentiation of meanings, there are people who write and speak in an obtruse, involved, pompous and thoroughly tiresome manner. Simple things are made complex and complex things are made well-nigh incomprehensible. It is actually the disease "logorrhea" or in plain everyday language "Jargon". The big problem today is that we are bombarded with jargon which is supposed to be a form of communication when it really isn't at all, and in fact is well on the way to destroying communication. Those who are interested in practicing gobbledegook must follow three principles: (a) Avoid active verbs, (b) Use plenty of words

where a few will suffice and pad, and (c) Be careful to use fuzzy words and phrases.

For instance if you look up a Lexicon of Gobbledegook you find: "Implement" means — what you do to carry out a decision, policy or program when you are doing nothing. "Finalize" means — signifying formal adoption of a decision policy or program, with silent agreement to give it a quiet burial.

Consequently you will never catch the jargoneer giving an active order with an active verb like "go to work" rather it is "it is imperative that action of a positive nature be implemented at the earliest date."

In other words when we want to get things across "Keep it simple." Don't give a fourteen point method to follow in any program or the producer-processor or party you are talking to will be lost. Even if you show him as well as tell him he will likely get lost in the maze of directions.

Quite frequently I read the music critics column and yearn for the good old days, when one could understand the review; however, was pleased to note not long ago of one of the briefest musical criticisms on record. It was "An amateur string quartet played Brahms here last evening. Brahms lost." Simple, plain, and straightforward.

When we are dealing with people, let us think of the word "communications" and all that it stands for in our own particular area. The International Association of Milk and Food Sanitarians might well develop the public relations concept of the Pennsylvania Railroad which is to have every employee of the railroad make a friend for himself and the company each day. If this concept was practiced throughout this Association on controversial matters, to the public outside the Association, there is little doubt that opposition to improvements we desire in the food and dairy field would be eliminated.

While practicing this concept remember "Don't treat the public like you would your relations."