
What was it you meant to say?

(March 04)

While presenting a workshop recently a participant asked, “What gives you the right to influence people that have not contracted to work with you?” Now, I was curious... I smiled, a bit taken aback by this question, asking myself “how can she not know?”

Recently I was out with my wife... we had a wonderful opportunity to be running errands together. One errand was to renew our driver’s licenses. Well, I’m sure you have had the experience of standing in long, slow moving lines. In the state of Illinois, when renewing your driver’s license, the “long line” is part of the process. This is often quite a task...crowds of people all moving in single file lines toward state employees who traditionally are less than motivated to provide efficient and quality customer service. However, on this fine day that Linda and I went, it was yet another opportunity to enjoy each other, the day, and all that life presents. (Funny how these fine days seem to keep occurring, over and over again!) During the mainstreaming of the “welcome-information” line, I was physically matching the local security guard as he assisted people. Soon he found us and was nice enough to put us quickly through this line. Next, while working with the women at the “service” window, we were able to enjoy their company, and they our company as we chatted and had fun together. Somehow, when asking people how they are and how they could enjoy their day more seems to bring people to a place just a little bit better for them than they were in...**hmmmmmm**... Then, commenting on the nice tattoo of the supervisor, along with a short “chat”, she assisted us happily through another two lines! (At this point, I was more than amused how we had streamlined through this entire process in less time than ever conceived to be possible!) After chatting with the picture taker just short bit, he put my wife in front of the line of many people, took her picture for her license and was able to send us on our way quickly. (This was immediately after he had a semi-hostile altercation with another patron who perhaps did not know the ability she had to influence this man). In the mean time, the supervisor of the facility came over and chatted with us about many personal experiences as if we had been friends for years!

Later, we went to the local grocery store where we were assisted by a less than enthusiastic deli-person. Linda turned to me and said “...honey, will you help that person to **feel better**?” It is an honor and a privilege that she asked me this small “favor”. Soon, perhaps she too will realize that she can move people into more better experiences (thanks for the phrase John!). Of course, with excitement and a smile, I proceeded to lead this woman to talk about her heritage (Irish), her trips to Ireland and all that went along with her happy and joyful experiences. We left her counter with her smiling (large by the way) wishing both of us a wonderful day.

Such opportunities, every day! I think now about how each person we meet has an influence on us: when we see our friends new baby, and the influence the new baby has on our state; or the influence that a complaining co-worker or irate customer may have on our state, the influence a particular person had on us when they helped us to **smile, and feel warm and content**.

In another example, I was lucky enough (funny how I have such opportunities every day?) recently to go to a bank where the teller was working, not smiling, and

greeted me with a less than hearty... “Hello, can I help you.” Well, as you might imagine already, I could not let this go. Compelling as it was, I proceeded to chat with her, with a hearty “**Hiiii**”, bathing her in rich tonality. Then, asking a question I often hear myself asking like “...when do you **start feeling realllly goooood** about being here today?”... “How are you? Fine you say?... and at what point do you let the rest of you know how you **feel really good**?(downward inflection, of course)”... After I knew she was in a really good state, I bid my good-bye, leaving feeling very good myself that someone else was experiencing being in a better or more comfortable or happier place than before we met... (Isn’t one of the NLP presuppositions; to leave people in a better state than when you met them?) (Oh, and by the way, who thought of these presuppositions?). Two weeks later I revisited that same bank...lo and behold the same teller was there. I saw her, standing there looking bored with little affect and no smile... as soon as we made eye contact, her affect changed, color flooded her face and she gleamed with a large smile greeting me enthusiastically... I greeted her with a hearty hello, stating and asking (while knowing the answer) “... You remember me don’t you?”... To which she replied yes (with a huge smile) and we had another short chat.

Now, I am in the sales and service industry. I perform in the roles of trainer, hypnotist, father, husband and service manager (to name a few)..., in essence a professional communicator. I meet new people every day... I chat with people I know everyday. Everyday we run into people we don’t know, and know. We see them, talk with them... and yes... everyday we influence them in one-way or another. When my workshop participant asks: “What gives you the right to influence people that have not contracted to work with you?” I respond, as a professional communicator, what gives us the right to not be intentional in our communication? How much do we want to communicate or influence “by accident”? For those of us in the know, we know that we are always influencing others... and if you like me want to leave people in better states, to help them to get what they want out of life and feel better... Then, we must be intentional in order to achieve our goals!

As professional communicators, should we not be response-able to be intentional in our communication? I believe that statement “one cannot, not communicate”. In that statement inherently is the presupposition that we will have some influence on another in our communication. So I ask... what response do you want to elicit?