

you, and pretty challenging to find strategies that would include both?

Before we go on, let's recognize that I've focused more on the personal aspects of the communications problem—how you get someone to "hear" you—and less on simply solving the task itself. Why? Because my premise is that the best way to get the practical task done is to go *behind* the obvious to start up the *real* engine that makes us work.

Now let's turn to the third category on your chart—Expectations.

Probable Expectations

This category deals with the fact that we are all conditioned by past experience to imagine what will or could or probably would happen at an upcoming communications encounter.

Given previous knowledge of the players—their roles relative to each other, what's going on currently at work, and what reasons there could be for the meeting—anyone could predict a probable scenario, complete with content, style, emotional level, even outcome. It's not only what we've lived that teaches us how to do this; it's all the books, plays, movies, and TV we've experienced that show us how people usually are and what they usually do in any given set of circumstances.

So we all walk around with expectations—stereotypic images of people's interactions in a close or a large encounter that we can call on when faced with an upcoming event. And we all use these to imagine the event because just walking into the unknown creates anxiety. Trying to predict it is preferable to just plain worrying over an impending experience. But curiously enough, we don't do it productively. Just vague, random musings, flashes of images, a general sense of the meeting. Not specific. Not analytical. We don't get added value from this kind of predicting and imagining.

That's too bad. *Deliberately* discovering what you expect will happen helps uncover your mental set and how conditioned you already are toward what you'll do. It helps you scrutinize whether that's the best choice of action, or whether to detour and start on another tack. So much of our communications are based on sheer habit, not designed from current information and deliberation. Anticipating by finding out what you're assuming, and often being surprised at how pointless or self-destructive or negative it is, can be an enlightening and valuable experience.

Even more valuable is trying to predict what your *audience* expects will happen.