**A Guide to Interact Interpret Respond – Reading Material**

**Overview**:

Communication is a two Way Street; a good interaction takes accurate interpretation of words and body language. Response is the outcome of good interpretation.

**Objectives:**

This reading material is designed to help you:

* Give and receive complete and relevant information
* Interpret through words
* Interpret body language and learn to respond appropriately.

Effective Sharing

Introduction

Giving information that is complete and relevant is very important. Complete information tends to be comprehensive in covering the issue or topic of interest. Complete information tells a complete story. Without complete information, a decision maker will get a distorted view of reality.

For example, the fashion site Boohoo.com was to be an international Internet fashion superstore that would offer street fashion on the web. Even though the site was designed for 18 different languages and currencies, the site was not user-friendly, the prices were too high in some cases, and you couldn't really get the true feel for the products. The initial concept was very good and did make some money, but like most internet startups, they spent more than they made, which is just not good business. All is not lost; with the right strategy and a test market, Boohoo might have done quite well…had they had the complete information.

Information is relevant if it has significance or can be applied to a specific situation, problem, or issue of interest. Here are some examples of relevant information. Human resource managers need information on hiring and employee turnover; operations managers need information on costs and productivity; marketing managers need information on sales projections and advertising rates; top executives need information on the strategic actions of their competitors. In contrast, product inventory information is not very relevant to a computer programmer.

When giving information, use all five senses whenever possible. In addition:

* Speak clearly.
* Use language that everyone understands.
* Vary your tone and pace.
* Move from the general to the specific.
* Use visuals— charts, maps and diagrams.
* Eyeball the listener.

Information can be given using two formats:

* The four point plan - ( Introduction, Details, examples and close)
* The SHARE Model

The following is a sample of an explanation of a Technical Concept using the SHARE Model:

**S**tate the main point of your message: “I’d like to tell you about the concept ‘Exception Handling’. Let me start by saying why Exception handling is important. Users have high expectations of the code we produce. Due to design errors or coding errors, our programs may fail in unexpected ways during execution.”

**H**ighlight other important points: Though there are some traditional methods of error handling, Java provides us a method of better error handling through ‘Exceptions’. Exceptions are a mechanism that provides the best of both worlds. Exceptions act like global error methods in that the exception mechanism is built into Java; exceptions are handled at many levels in a program, locally and/or globally. Exceptions fall into the following categories:

* Checked Exceptions: Checked exceptions are certain errors that a programmer can identify and handle, for example invalid input.
* Unchecked Exceptions: Unchecked exceptions represent error conditions that are considered “fatal” to program execution, however are not in the control of the programmer, for example insufficient memory to run programs or hardware failure.
* You do not have to do anything with an unchecked exception. Your program will terminate with an appropriate error message.

**A**ssure the receiver’s understanding: I understand that you would like me to explain on how to handle exceptions. Here is how we handle exceptions:

* Exception handling is accomplished through the ‘try – catch’ mechanism, or by a ‘throws’ clause in the method declaration.
* For any code that throws a checked exception, you can decide to handle the exception yourself, or pass the exception “up the chain” (to a parent class).
* To handle the exception, you write a “try-catch” block. To pass the exception “up the chain”, you declare a “throws” clause in your method or class declaration.
* If the method contains code that may cause a checked exception, you MUST handle the exception OR pass the exception to the parent class.

This is how the Try-Catch Mechanism works... Wherever your code may trigger an exception, the normal code logic is placed inside a block of code starting with the “try” keyword:

* After the “try” block, the code to handle the exception, should it arise, is placed in a block of code starting with the “catch” keyword.
* You may also write an optional “finally” block. This block contains code that is always executed, either after the “try” block code, or after the “catch” block code.
* “Finally” blocks can be used for operations that must happen no matter what (i.e. Cleanup operations such as closing a file).

**R**espond to the receiver: Have I answered your question?

**E**mphasize/summarize your main ideas:

* I would like to sum up by saying:
* Exceptions are a powerful error handling mechanism.
* Exceptions in Java are built into the language.
* Exceptions can be handled by the programmer (try-catch), or handled by the Java environment (throws).

To share information effectively:

* State one idea at a time
* Use proper structure
* Use correct terminology
* Add details when appropriate giving the right verbal and non-verbal cues
* Repeat if required
* Encourage feedback
* **State one idea at a time** - When you state one idea at a time it Increases retention and is easy to understand
* **Use proper structure** - Introduce what you are going to say, give the details( remember the rule of three), give an action plan and conclude by emphasizing key points again
* **Use correct terminology** - Do not use difficult words or words that can easily be misinterpreted
* **Add details** when appropriate giving the right verbal and non-verbal cues - refer to the movie Flavours - Nodding of head
* **Repeat if required** - key points need to be repeated for clear action
* **Encourage feedback** - Ask the receiver to summarize what they have just heard

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| Being Specific |
| Focus on essentials - Be Specific  “BE SPECIFIC”  Pointers:  One of the most important skills for communicating clearly, , is to “Be Specific.”  1. Say what’s most important  2. Give an example  3. Quantify & Qualify (When, Where, How Much…)  Here are a few examples  1. I need it by tomorrow.  Quantify - I need it in my hands at least 15 minutes before my 9 A.M. presentation tomorrow. |

Note:

A verbal cue is when you can figure someone out based on what they said, or HOW they said it. Like, you know you're friend is irritated when she says, "Oh, RIGHT, I really MEANT that!"

A non-verbal clue is when you observe someone's expression or body language to decide what they are meaning or thinking. Like, you drive by a guy and splash muddy water on him. He flips you the finger and scowls at you as you drive by. You know, without his having said a word, that he's angry.

**Interpret through Words**

**Introduction:**

We interpret words depending on whether we understand them in the first place and our previous experience of using them. For some people, the term "Outstanding" could mean the same as another person's good.

Ask hundred people in a room what "Competitive Advantage" means and you're likely to get 30-40 different answers depending on the people's personal experience with that word and their understanding of what it means.

To interpret accurately we must:

* Focus on essentials
* Keywords - Identify intended repetition
* Notice emphasized words and phrases
* Differentiate between facts and inferences

**Keywords** - Look for the key words and understand the meaning ask for clarity if it is unclear.

**Identify intended repetition** - often key messages are repeated, Identify intended repetition and paraphrase

**Notice** emphasized words and phrases

Look at what is stressed

I Never Said She Stole My Money: 7 Different Meanings

"I never said she stole my money" has 7 different meanings depending on the stressed word.

"**I**" didn't say she stole my money - someone else said it.

I "**didn't**" say she stole my money - I didn't say it.

I didn't "**say**" she stole my money - I only implied it.

I didn't say "**she**" stole my money - I said someone did, not necessarily her.

I didn't say she "**stole**" my money - I considered it borrowed, even though she didn't ask.

I didn't say she stole "**my**" money - only that she stole money.

I didn't say she stole my "**money**" - she stole stuff which cost me money to replace.

Differentiate between facts and inferences

Fact-Inference Confusion:

Statements made by people can be either factual or inferential. Factual statements are made by an observer after observation. Therefore, it is limited to what is observed only. For example, if I were to say "Ashreen is wearing a leopard print jacket." it would be factual as everyone can see that she is indeed wearing one.

An inferential statement, on the other hand, is giving your own meaning or interpretation. It may or may not be true or perhaps it is something that is only true in certain circumstances. Therefore, all sorts of problems can arise from inferential statements when people take them in as factual statements.

For example, before I met Ashreen, I have been told that she is difficult to work with. Upon getting to know her, I have found her to be the complete opposite. The person had made that inferential statement based on their rocky relationship and his/her own personal feelings.

Therefore, we have to be careful about these two different types of statements to avoid making mistakes in judgment.

While Receiving Information:

To understand content and context use the acronym “FOCUS”

**F**ocus the discussion on the specific information you need. Do not get diverted by any side trackers.

Example: “I need to ask you about the computer meeting you attended yesterday.”

**O**pen-end question to expand the discussion. Open ended questions give us more information than close ended questions.

Example: “What kinds of decisions were made regarding expansion of our departmental system?”

**C**lose-end question to get specifics. Confirm your understanding using close ended questions.

Example: “Did the committee decide to buy Dell computers?”

**U**se active listening skills to understand what you are hearing. Clarification is important to confirm your understanding.

Example: “What I think I heard you say was that the decision was made?”

**S**ummarize and close the discussion. For important information it is essential that you summarize.

Example: “So to wrap up, the system will expand and we will be using Dells. Thanks for keeping me up to date.”

**Interpret through Body language**

**Introduction:**

People tend to have much less conscious control over their non-verbal messages than of what they’re actually saying. This is partly because non-verbal communication is much more emotional in nature, and therefore much more instinctive. If there is a mismatch between the two, therefore, you should probably trust the non-verbal messages, rather than the words used.A lack of non-verbal message may also be a signal of sorts, suggesting that the speaker is carefully controlling their body language, and may be trying to hide their true emotions.

The importance of Understanding Body Language

Interpersonal communication is much more than the explicit meaning of words, the information or message conveyed. It also includes implicit messages, whether intentional or not, which are expressed through non-verbal behaviors.

Non-verbal communications include facial expressions, the tone and pitch of the voice, gestures displayed through body language (kinesics) and the physical distance between the communicators (proxemics).

These non-verbal signals can give clues, additional information and meaning over and above spoken communication.

Non-verbal Messages Allow People To:

* Reinforce or modify what is said in words. For example, people may nod their heads vigorously when saying "Yes" to emphasize that they agree with the other person, but a shrug of the shoulders and a sad expression when saying "I'm fine thanks,” may imply that things are not really fine at all!
* Convey information about their emotional state.
* Define or reinforce the relationship between people.
* Provide feedback to the other person.
* Regulate the flow of communication, for example by signaling to others that they have finished speaking or wish to say something.

Learning the Language

Many popular books on non-verbal communication present the topic as if it were a language that can be learned, the implication being that if the meaning of every nod, eye movement, and gesture were known, the real feelings and intentions of a person would be understood.

This, of course, is absolutely true.

Unfortunately interpreting non-verbal communication is not that simple. Non-verbal communication is not a language with a fixed meaning. It is influenced and driven by the context in which it occurs. This includes the place and the people concerned, as well as the culture.

For example, a nod of the head between colleagues in a committee meeting may mean something very different from when the same action is used to acknowledge someone across a crowded room, and again when two people are having a social conversation.

Interpersonal communication is further complicated in that it is usually not possible to interpret a gesture or expression accurately on its own. Non-verbal communication consists of a complete package of expressions, hand and eye movements, postures, and gestures which should be interpreted along with speech (verbal communication).

The Importance of Non-verbal Communication

When we communicate, non-verbal cues can be as important, or in some cases even more important, than what we say.

Non-verbal communication can have a great impact on the listener and the outcome of the communication.

Types of Non-Verbal Communication

The types of interpersonal communication that are not expressed verbally (with speech) are called non-verbal communications.

There are many different types of non-verbal communication.

They include:

Body Movements (Kinesics), for example, hand gestures or nodding or shaking the head;

Posture or how you stand or sit, whether your arms are crossed, and so on;

Eye Contact, where the amount of eye contact often determines the level of trust and trustworthiness;

Para-language or aspects of the voice apart from speech, such as pitch, tone, and speed of speaking;

Closeness or Personal Space (Proxemics), which determines the level of intimacy;

Facial Expressions, including smiling, frowning and even blinking; and

Physiological Changes, for example, sweating or blinking more when nervous.

In Conclusion…

Non-verbal communication is an extremely complex yet integral part of overall communication skills. However, people are often totally unaware of their non-verbal behavior.

A basic awareness of non-verbal communication strategies, over and above what is actually said can help to improve interaction with others. Knowledge of these signs can be used to encourage people to talk about their concerns and can lead to a greater shared understanding, which is, after all, the purpose of communication.