

## Preemptive Communications: Stop the Misunderstandings Before they Start.

By George Scott

*“Just do what you’re supposed to do. I gave you a job description when I hired you.”*

Saying this type of comment will likely lead to a negative outcome.

A supervisor making the statement is a “wanter” – that is wanting the employee to train him/herself. The supervisor is abdicating the responsibility of providing proper training and clear communication.

### Definition

Before we proceed, let’s clarify the term

“preemptive.” Loosely defined it means ‘a step is taken to prevent a problem from arising.’

*“With bilateral communications, the message sent is not always the message received.”*

A secondary meaning is ‘to take action before others can’

### General comment

As a leader, it can be frustrating to train someone ... especially if the trainee “just isn’t getting it”. The natural inclination is to *just do it yourself*.

### Causes

*Frame of reference:* As a speaker, are you using the language of your listener? For example, technical jargon may not be understood by a non-technical listener.

*Situational Dynamics & Context:* A noisy environment can easily lead to miscommunications, as both parties’ attention can be diverted by nearby activities.

*Nonverbal messaging:* What is your body language saying to your listener? Are sitting forward or slouching? Is the volume of your voice so low that you are difficult to hear? Are you looking at the person you’re speaking with or do your eyes keep wondering away from that person?

*Hearing Impaired Message Receiver:* According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other

Communication Disorders (NIDCD), roughly 15% of Americans over 18 experience some degree of hearing loss. For individuals over 71, the percent skyrockets to 65.3%.

### Cures

*Assess the listener:* Is the listener wearing a hearing aid? Does the person’s face give the impression their mind is elsewhere?

*Avoid jargon:* You and your immediate peers may understand what you’re saying ... but the rest of the world does not. Use plain, easy-to-understand language when speaking with someone outside your professional circle.

*Checkpoint questions:* Ensure you are understood by pausing for a moment and asking if what you are saying makes sense. Another option is to ask the listener to summarize what he/she just heard.

*Proper training:* During challenging times it’s crucial to ramp up training programs rather than putting them on a back burner or being shut down.

Internal training programs should provide:

- Orientation & Onboarding training
- Job Specific
- Technical Training
- Soft skills
- Leadership Development
- Advanced & Executive Training

Not all these components are necessary for every business. Use common sense when establishing your training program. Some components may need to be enhanced for your specific business needs.

### Conclusion

Effective training will enhance your employees’ awareness, increasing the likelihood of improved (a/k/a preemptive) communications.

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