

The Power of Communication

By Mindi L. Schaefer, M.S., RP, OSBA, AACP
Authorized Remote Online Notary
Administrative and Paralegal Support Director
POLING

Published Summer 2022

My Personal Story

In 1987, my Grandad had a left hemisphere stroke in the cerebrum. As a result of the stroke, he lost his speech and function of his right arm with some unsteadiness in his walk and balance. My Grandad was larger than life to me. At the time, I was 9, my sister Deana was 5, and my brother Jason was chilling in my Mom Linda's belly.

This fundamentally changed our family. The emotional impact, the financial, the physical. Even as a kid, I remember wondering how could this work out? How could we figure this out? He couldn't communicate with words to us aside from the occasional "G.D." when in complete frustration mode. I had always used my words to communicate and he did the same. Worst of all, how would my brother communicate with him? He would never know him in a traditional speaking capacity like I had or my sister. So much for a 9-year-old to think about, but at some point, it just clicked.

I'm not sure how. I'm not sure when. But at some point, in some time after the stroke, I figured it out as a kid how to communicate with Grandad again. I wish I could say I had an epiphany one day in some angelic moment in time, but as a kid I just knew this larger-than-life man was still my Grandad and still larger than life. My entire family shifted to ensure that while the stroke took his speech, it would not take him from us.

So, time moved on and my new communication plan emerged with my Grandad. Looking back, I can see how I pivoted to change my plan. I asked yes and no questions because those were responses he could say. I developed a way to understand the hand gestures to different locations or people and how to home in an almost perfect guessing system of places or people without frustrating him though that did happen at times (those were "G.D." moments).

We evolved. He evolved. It wasn't easy and for my brother it was the only way he ever knew. So, with time, understanding, and a tremendous amount of love, our family changed our communication pattern to adapt our overall communication plan to be inclusive of Grandad so he too was still heard and understood.

Why It Matters

So why does a story from my childhood about my amazing family matter? Because to me, it is a prime example of the power of communication and how we too must evolve and change our communication

patterns with others whether personally or professionally to ensure we are being inclusive leaders of everyone and ensuring they are heard and understood.

“As discussed in 10 Things the Best Leaders Do, great leaders also tailor their communications style (tone, pace, energy) and message based on who they are speaking with and the format and medium of the conversations.”

So why modify your communication pattern, you are you so be you, right? No. By modifying your communication pattern, you are showing others you care and that you are truly paying attention and want to ensure they are heard.

By listening to others for their particular communication patterns, you are increasing your actively listening skills to ensure you are a listener and not just a responder.

Adjusting and changing your communication patterns with others to ensure they are heard is a true leadership skill, but it also promotes other leaders to take a cue from you and do the same. Leadership by example!

Leadership success is guided by efficient and effective communication skills so adapt, evolve, pivot, etc. and ensure that everyone around you feels heard, included, and understood always.

Resources:

- Mom
- Grandad
- Life
- <https://www.groupsixty.com/ideas-blog/2019/1/4/the-best-leaders-tailor-their-communications-style-for-impact>
- <https://www.groupsixty.com/10-things-great-leaders-do>