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Simple Rules

BEST PRACTICES

Written by: Kirk Hoaglund, Chief Executive Officer

In January of 2021, hopeful for a new year following the incredible events of 2020, I wrote an article about listening “[Listen In and Keep Up](#)”. At the time I was thinking about the hard work we all had ahead in adapting to new ways of doing business, forced by the pandemic and all of its repercussions. I’ve since had new reasons to think hard about listening and a few of the other key elements of good communication. As I also mentioned in “[The Next Chapter](#)” -- as I continue to transition the executive leadership of Clientek to a new group, I’ve needed to pay closer attention to the clarity and frequency of communications. Here are some observations based on my own, self-assessments along the way.

Listening. Such a simple idea that can often be so hard to implement. Listening requires patience and attention. It requires that you care about what others are saying. When I am not able to meet all three of these requirements, I need

to be honest and own up to it. With our busy and exciting lives, there will be those times. Own it, admit it, return to the conversation later.

Speaking respectfully. When I am in a hurry to get all my great words poured out I risk treating my listeners with disrespect. I don’t mean to do that. But how would they know? Let there be silence. Take a minute to think about what you need to say. While talking, pause. Give the listener some relief. Give them that same minute to think about what you just said. If it was important enough to say, you should want that - you want them to understand you. Show them you trust them by letting there be silence.

Simplify. I’ve been studying classical singing for some time. I remember in the earlier times when I was fascinated by ornamentation. I’d love to fancy-up the song to show my command of interpretation. That is complexity for the sake of complexity. My voice teacher pointed out “Sing the song

as simply and honestly as possible, first. Then add extras, but only when necessary.” I sometimes find myself failing that lesson as I hammer out bunches of big, fancy words. Keep it simple.

Accept. We all interrupt each other while conversing. We intend harm almost none of the time. Interruption is normal, it is what people do, so accept it. Repetition is a complement - accept it. When someone else repeats your point, in their own words, no need for objection. That is what you wanted, actually. Questions and even confusion are important reactions to an unclear message. Accept the fact that you were unclear and work within the conversation to fix it.

When we are working with others on things that are important to all of us, taking the time to communicate carefully can be hard. Important work brings excitement, disagreement, opinions, and emotions. That is why we all love it. I am resolved to check myself more often to make sure I am following some of these simple rules of good communication.

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