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Grace & Intent

BUSINESS INSIGHTS

Written by: Craig Vosper, Chief Delivery Officer

Many of the problems in this world stem from one simple issue: lack of communication. These problems, ranging from historical blunders like The Charge of the Light Brigade to misunderstandings over text message, highlight the fundamental role that communication plays in our lives. Our words and actions shape how we connect with others, but if we're not cautious, they can easily be misinterpreted.

I recently traveled to a customer location to talk through some concerns they were having with our teams on their project. This project is of immense importance which intensifies stress levels and causes heightened anxiety about personal and project success.

Over the course of a few days, we worked through the challenges and unsurprisingly each issue seemed to circle back to the same underlying thing: the breakdown of communication. This made me take a step back and consider the various ways messages might be misconstrued - even if I believe they have been very clear from the start.

While not comprehensive, here are a few key considerations to bear in mind as you navigate your day and reflect on how your words and actions might inadvertently affect others:

- Provide the 'why' behind every ask or change so people can better understand your intent.
- Ask people what they intended whenever you perceive ill intent, assuming it and moving on will only make things worse.
- Don't take concerns to people's bosses, take it directly to them and do it as soon as possible.
- Ensure you communicate expectations clearly, even if you think they are (or should be) understood. The burden of clarity is on you, not the person you are talking with.
- Ask questions and have patience for others asking questions. This is the best way to ensure everyone has a common understanding of the situation at hand.

These are just five things I've come to recognize more clearly in recent weeks. With a little effort, I'm sure you could identify a dozen of your own. Ultimately, I think what we all need to do is give each other some grace and assume positive intent from others as our initial position.

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