

THE COMMUNICATOR'S POCKETBOOK

2nd Edition

By **Seán Mistéil** *Drawings by Phil Hailstone*

“Provides the busy executive with a very useful reminder of the importance and essentials of communication.”

Susan Leigh Doyle, Training and Research Consultant, Leigh-Doyle & Associates

“Working in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural environment I am confronted every day with the difficulties inherent in achieving good communication. I found this pocketbook clear and concise – just what we are all looking for in a communication – and will certainly try to apply it in my dealings with colleagues.”

Emer Daly, Principal Administrator, European Commission

“An excellent book, laden with practical advice. Everyone will learn something from it and most will learn quite a lot. Few could do better than leave this well laid out on their desk.”

Michael J. Gibney, Managing Director, Nutriscan Ltd

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COMMUNICATION: THE CHALLENGE



WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The challenge facing every manager, as a communicator, is the same; you cannot win if you don't try. You must try and then try again, as often as necessary.

Communication:

- Is the knitting which holds organisations together – and the thread which keeps coming apart
- Is the greatest single influence on organisational effectiveness
- Needs a lot more effort and sensitivity than is often shown
- Is based on assumptions, and debased by assumptions (no matter how hard you try!)
- Cannot be perfected

COMMUNICATION: THE CHALLENGE

HOME TRUTHS



If you really want to do something about communication in your workplace, one of the first challenges for you is to accept these **home truths**:

- Most of us are poor communicators and very poor listeners
- Few of us try very hard to get our message across to others
- When 'communicating', most of us take little advantage of the various media available to us
- We could all improve our still valuable writing skills in this age of speedy mass communications

The truth is that the consequences of low standards of communication are far-reaching; yet most of us accept or tolerate low standards of communication in business – even when we know the cost and waste involved.



COMMUNICATION: THE CHALLENGE



CAUSES OF FAILURE

You want my attention? You may have to work hard to get it – and harder to keep it!

- The workplace, like everywhere else, contains many distractions that limit our ability to concentrate on what others say to us
- We like to blame modern lifestyles and competing pressures for such failings
- Many of us think we are good communicators; we are quicker to identify failings in others than in ourselves
- When you are communicating well, you may only be starting; improving communicating standards tends to generate even higher expectations

COMMUNICATION: THE CHALLENGE

THE RIGHT BALANCE



- Many employees will present you with conflicting demands; they want to be fully informed, and they will pay a lot of attention to what is said – but only for a short time
- As people become more aware of communication needs, dissatisfaction with current standards tends to grow

"What can I do?

Either I tell them so little that they think I am withholding information, or I tell them so much that they cannot remember it all!"

- If you get feedback, it may well come too late – and from the wrong source



COMMUNICATION: THE CHALLENGE



THE RIGHT BALANCE

The need to communicate is too often and too easily judged by managers from their perspective alone.

Managers, more than others, depend on effective communication, in order to get the job done. All too often managers:

- Fail to see the challenge facing us all; that even when we do nothing about it 'communication' does not stop – it never stops
- See no need to consult those affected by their decisions; they depend instead on their own 'insight' into the minds and hearts of others

RIVER OF WORDS • RIVER OF WORDS • RIVER OF WORDS

COMMUNICATION: THE CHALLENGE

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?



The working environment creates many of its own laws about what communication really is.

Several communication theories focus on the process used when a person sends an idea or message to a specific person (receiver). The steps involved in 'reaching' the target person(s) with the message include the use of signals and stimuli that trigger a response from the receiver(s).

These theories can help communicators emphasise the **exchange** of ideas and information and the **action** or reaction that arises from that exchange and contact.

Any theory relating to people can only guide us in our own experience. It does not work exactly the same way for each of us.

COMMUNICATION: THE CHALLENGE

RELATIONSHIPS



The **relationship** between the communicator and the receiver(s) (an audience or an individual recipient of a message) is what really defines communication. The audience response reveals what is understood about the communicator's 'action'.

Models of communication – 'how it works' – often tend to simplify the process in seeking to explain:

- The **need** to communicate at all
- The **skills** people possess to help them communicate
- The tools, methods or **media** available to them, and
- **How** people communicate, using their own skills and the media available to them

Communication is like a **dividend** – profits earned and shared on the basis of good planning and investment, hard work, success – and a bit of luck! Not surprisingly, that involves making assumptions.

About the Author

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Seán has over 30 years experience in the Irish public sector. He has worked mainly in the human and organisational development areas. He was closely involved in major organisational change programmes in the Irish Telecommunications Service and the Irish Peat Board, having previously worked in a number of Government departments and the Irish Civil Service Training Centre.

Seán has also contributed to a range of third level courses and degree programmes, specialising in communication skills, personal development, business development and human resource management. He also worked as an independent consultant and trainer and with the former Combat Poverty Agency, before joining the Citizens Information Board.



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