

Perspective



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Stake Your Claim—In Yourself

At the past two NAE4HA meetings, we've encouraged folks to Stake their Claim in Oklahoma in 2004. The meeting is less than a year and a half away, and it's time to "Stake Our Claim" – In Ourselves.

Individually and collectively, we have unique skills and abilities. During the next year, we must capitalize on our individual strengths and find ways for our work styles to complement those of our co-workers. When we capitalize on each other's strengths, we create a situation where the whole (the 2004 meeting) is greater than the sum of its parts (us as individual members).

While we Stake our Claim in professionalism and personal growth, we must remain focused on accomplishing the short and long term goals set by our committees. As I think about the visioning exercise we completed at last year's state association meeting, one thing rises above the rest – we wanted to conduct a national meeting that would set the standard for all those that followed. It's time to check our progress toward that vision.

There are three very important questions to ask of ourselves and

others during the next year:

1. Am I a contributing member of my committee?
2. Is the work of my committee on track?
3. What can I do to help others?

As we face the personal and professional uncertainty of our careers within Extension, we must remember that if we look, we can generally find opportunity for growth as individuals, as professionals and as an association in the challenges that lie ahead.

Susan Murray

2004 NAE4-HA Co-Chair

Special Points of Interest:

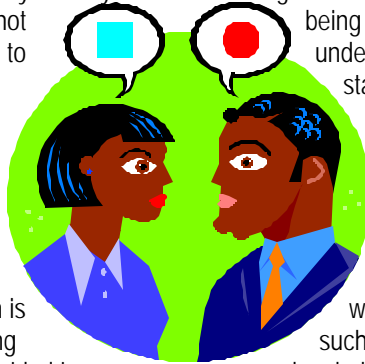
- 2004 NAE4HA web address
<http://nae4ha.okstate.edu>
Committees may begin making materials assessable on line. Send materials electronically to Carl Venable.
- **2004 NAE4HA Logo**—Destroy any clip art dated prior to February 2003. Art has been updated.
- Professional Development:
"Communication"
- OAE4-HA Conference Registration
- NAE4-HA Message Board
- Importance of 4-H Project Work

Spring Issue—Communication for the Professional and Volunteer

Source: Communicate Clearly by Robert Heller, 1998

Being Understood

Delivering a message that may be misunderstood is all too easy. It may happen because you are not clear about what you want to say; or because your language is vague even though your objectives are clear; or because your body language very subtly contradicts your verbal message. Another reason why it may happen is that you are communicating with someone who has decided in advance what the message is – without listening to you and regardless of what you are actually trying to say.



Interpreting Dialogue

Take statements at face value without reading hidden meanings into what is being said. Test your understanding by rephrasing statements and repeating them to the speaker. It should then be clear that you have understood each other – or they may correct you and clarify their statement. However, watch for physical signs, such as evasive eye contact, and verbal signs, such as hesitation or contradiction, that provide clues to the truthfulness of the message. Be careful not to hear only what you want to hear and nothing else.

Points to Remember

- Confidence is inspired in a speaker if you listen intently.
- What you are told should be regarded as trustworthy until proved otherwise.
- Misunderstandings are caused by wishful listening – hearing only what you want to hear.
- Constant interruptions can be very off-putting for people who find it difficult to get across their point of view.

Responding to Someone

The first step in responding to what you hear is to listen properly. If you are preparing to answer or are thinking about what to say next while you should be listening, you are not giving your full attention to what is being said. In your response, outline what you have understood so far. If you need repetition, further explanation, or extra information, do not hesitate to ask for it. Keep an open mind about what people say.

Checking You Understand the Message

Use phrases such as these when you need to clarify what has been said, or if you think that your own message might have been misunderstood. Take responsibility for finding out the things you need to know, and listen to the answers you are given.

“I’m afraid I didn’t quite catch what you said. Would you mind repeating it?”

“I’m aware that this isn’t your field but I would be very interested to hear your opinion.”

“I can’t have explained myself clearly. What I meant to establish was…”

Reflective Listening

“The two-way nature of communication – so that both sides understand each other – is widely ignored. Listening techniques are vital, since how you listen conveys meaning to the other person and helps to make the exchange successful.” (Heller, 1998)

When you are in search of information, consensus, or a working relationship, the more obviously you listen attentively, the better. You may need to speak to get a response, but show you do not wish to dominate the conversation. Ask open questions, which lead to discussion, and keep your responses brief. Repeat key words silently as you hear them to help you to remember what is said.

USING LISTENING SKILLS

TYPE OF LISTENING	PUTTING METHODS INTO PRACTICE
EMPATHIZING Drawing out the speaker and getting information in a supportive, helpful way.	Empathize by imagining yourself in the other person’s position, trying to understand what they are thinking, and letting them feel comfortable – possibly by relating to their emotional experiences. Pay close attention to what the person is saying, talk very little, and use encouraging nods and words.
ANALYZING Seeking concrete information and trying to disentangle fact from emotion.	Use analytical questions to discover the reasons behind the speaker’s statements, especially if you need to understand a sequence of facts or thoughts. Ask questions carefully, so you can pick up clues from the answers and use the person’s responses to help you form your next set of questions.
SYNTHESIZING Proactively guiding the exchange toward an objective.	If you need to achieve a desired result, make statements to which others can respond with ideas. Listen and give your answers to others’ remarks in a way that suggest which ideas can be enacted and how they might be implemented. Alternatively, include a different solution in your next question.

Spring Issue—Communication for the Professional and Volunteer

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Acting on What You Hear

In some cases, communication is an end in itself, for example – an update on progress. In others action is vital – clearing a bottleneck. What you must never do is promise an action and fails to deliver. Keep your promises – and take action as soon as possible.



Listen First – The three steps to successful communication are: listen carefully to what is said; respond (if necessary, ask for clarification); finally, take action.

Effective Use of the Written Message

Structure Message

Write the purpose of the message and summarize its main conclusion in your opening paragraphs. In the body of the message, use headings subheadings, or bullet points to drawing attention to key facts. End the message with recommendations for action.

Ensure Clarity

Avoid ambiguities. If you are unsure about your conclusions, state the alternative and invite readers to make up their own minds. Express yourself in short sentences. Above all, put yourself in the readers' shoes. Will they understand what

you mean? Get a friend or colleague to read the message before it is distributed.

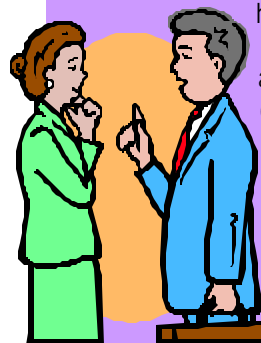
Being Concise

If you are concise, you will reinforce the clarity of your message. Never use two words where one will do, or three where two are enough. Use short words rather than long ones. Spend time on the message's main conclusion and place smaller summaries at the start of each section. When reading through the message, cut where you can. This should improve the sense of the text.

Body Language

"Your body language – a huge range of unconscious physical movements – can either strengthen communication or damage it. Even if you are sitting completely still, you may be unknowingly communicating a powerful message about your real feelings." (Heller, 1998)

Body language consists of posture, facial expressions, and gestures. The combination of ones feet, hands, arms, and shoulders communicates a positive, neutral or negative message. Combine this message with facial expressions created with the eyes, eye brows and mouth one can communicate: listening with approval, paying attention, emphasizing a point, uncertainty, need for reassurance and conflict. It is important to make sure you are not intentionally wearing a hostile expression. This can be difficult for those who have natural or neutral facial expression that can be perceived unintentionally as sad, thoughtful or even hostile. The third form of body language – gestures includes how our hands, arms and head communicate acceptance, denial, openness, closeness, friendliness and hostility.



Learning to read body language can be very important in communicating with others. To assist one in communicating, an individual has to make a conscious effort to communicate a non-verbal message which compliments the verbal message. Communication is further assisted by learning to read the non-verbal message being communicated by the other party. As the old adage says "Actions speak louder than words."

Pointers for the written message

- ◆ Be clear in your own mind about what you want to communicate and deliver it with clarity.
- ◆ Structure the message so that it is clear and can be correctly understood.
- ◆ Deliver the message succinctly or concisely.

Importance of 4-H Project Work

Submitted by David Sorrell

How critical do you view 4-H Project work?

As you know, we just recently completed our state 4-H Project Record Book Judging and we have some very impressive numbers to share with you.

Cumulatively, the 281 4-H members submitting record books conducted over 13,000 speeches or demonstrations and participated in or conducted more than 17,000 leadership activities. These dedicated youth performed well over 170,000 citizenship and community service projects.

Here are the numbers that get me – this year alone, project scholarship finalists reached almost 10 million people with 4-H educational information, and they devoted nearly 450,000 hours of service. At minimum wage their contribution to Oklahoma communities is valued at more than \$2.3 million.

While we are all very proud of what 4-H does for young people, we should be even more proud of what 4-H members do for others and their communities. Four-H members are investing their time and energy in sharing their talents and knowledge

with others.

Which brings us back to the question. How critical do you view 4-H Project work?

Based on the numbers, the time you or a volunteer spends teaching, encouraging and mentoring one dedicated 4-H member can have a significant impact. The average 4-H member that submitted a project record book reached 35,587 people with 4-H information. That same 4-H member contributed 1,601 hours of their time helping with or conducting educational or community service programs.

As extension educators our plates stay full with things to do. Some of those things are critical, some are nice to do, and some are not our job. I believe that teaching project related curriculum and mentoring 4-H members to do 4-H Project work is critical. How we work with youth is far more important than with how many youth.

2003 Annual Meeting

In this edition, you will find the registration information and forms needed for the 2003 Annual OAE4-HA meeting. As members of the annual planning committee, we hope that you will join us in Oklahoma City, July 30 through August 1st. This year's meeting will focus on "Preparing for 2004."

With this in mind, we have planned somewhat of a traveling meeting this year. We will start out at the Oklahoma County office to do committee work, move to the Renaissance on Thursday to have first hand experience with the staff and hotel facilities, have a states lunch out in Bricktown and then on Friday we move back to the Oklahoma County office. While this might be a bit confusing, it will allow us to meet our conference goals and make it "affordable".

2004 is fast approaching. With the support of our organization, "we definitely will survive".

OAE4-HA Annual Planning Committee

Tracy Branch, Janna Kelly, Jeff Dill, Melody Durant, Cindy Conner, Susan Meitl, Gloria King, Mike Weber

2004 NAE4-HA Message Board



Operations Committee

Update from Bart Cardwell and Larry Klumpff

Hello fellow members!

- Facilities have been secured and will be second to none in the Cox Business Center, Renaissance and Westin Hotels.
- OSU will be cooperating with us to fulfill equipment needs.
- Sub committees for meals and transportation are finalizing details. If you need a transportation request form contact Tommy Puffinbarger or Ron Justice.
- Volunteers are being actively recruited through professional associations and at the county level.

All committee members look forward to showing off the hospitality of Oklahomans and the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service!



Promotion & Visibility Committee

Attention—Destroy any electronic logo dated prior to February 2003. The art has been updated.

Orange OCES and 4-H Shirts

Custom order your shirt and design preference. Any style—only \$25.

Two shirt Options, 100% cotton:

- Long-sleeved button-down dress shirt—Men's sizes only
- Short sleeve Polo—Men's and Women's sizes

Three design Options:

- OCES
- OCES/4-H Youth Development
- 4-H Osage Shield

Web Page Update—The web page is ready for posting committee materials. [New web address: http://nae4ha.okstate.edu](http://nae4ha.okstate.edu). Please send forms and materials to Carl Venable in Grady County.

"To Make the Best Better"

The *Perspective Newsletter* is published quarterly by the Oklahoma Association of Extension 4H Agents, 205 4-H Youth Development Bldg, Stillwater, OK 74078, (580) 332-2153 (Becky), (405) 744-8891 (Karla).

Information for the news letter will be due the first Friday of the following months: Oct., Jan., April, and July. Issues will be published in Nov., Feb., May, and Aug.

E-mail information to rlw@okstate.edu or kknoepf@okstate.edu. Articles may be edited for content and space.

The *Perspective* is one way of communicating educational information and updates to members and friends of 4H.

The OCES offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, or status as a Vietnam-era veteran and is an equal opportunity employer.

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