Higher Education Forum

Towards an Educated India:

The Power of Silence in Effective Communication

"Among the wise of secret knowledge, I am their silence."
— Bhagavad Gita, Chapter X

We have realms of papers, books and online material dedicated to effective communication both verbal and written. One may have also come across a lot of research and books on the importance of non - verbal communication. However, rarely has one discussed, read or pondered upon the power of silence as a tool for effective communication.

In recent years, researchers have suggested that silence is not simply an absence of noise or doesn't mean 'nothing' but constitutes a part of communication as important as speech. The context of a situation defines the power and message of silence. Constructive silence moves a conversation or discussion forward. Destructive silence shuts down communication and creates barriers that discourage speakers from expressing their thoughts. Thus, silences can be 'leaden' and they can also be 'golden'. We have all experienced various negative silences that could be called awkward, appalled, embarrassed, defensive, and fearful silences. These could be termed as leaden silences. However, there are also silences that are golden, such as confident, comfortable, reflective, peaceful, or respectful silences. Such silences can be helpful tools for enhancing the communication and to promote and maintain the existing relationship.

Silence can serve many functions in a conversation. This is one tool that many therapists and investigators use. When you are subjected to silence, it feels like pressure, and you are likely to reveal something you had decided not to disclose. People in power use silence as strategy, such as an interviewer. An experienced interviewer may let a silence hang, just to see how the person being interviewed conducts him or herself. Silence may sometimes indicate hostility or disagreement. When we experience anger, fear, or embarrassment, our cognitive mind shuts down. We sit there enraged, fuming and unable to speak. Silence can indicate profoundness, such as respect, awe or horror. It can indicate contemplation or empathy. It can indicate authority and power. Silences create a listening space and deepen your understanding of others and yourself.

Generally speaking, eastern cultures value silence more than the use of words, while in western

culture, sometimes the opposite is true. Silence can have different meaning in different cultures. In their book 'Communication between cultures' Samovar and Porter, elaborate using an example: "In response to the question: 'Will you marry me?' Silence in English would be interpreted as uncertainty, in Japanese it would be interpreted as acceptance, in Igbo (Southeastern Nigeria) it would be considered as a denial if the woman was to continue to stand there and acceptance if she ran away."

Silence can be an asset and an effective strategy in negotiations. Negotiators from cultures that consider silence stalling rush to fill the void with chatter. This weakens their message and position. In a hurry to fill the silence, they often settle for less and compromise their bargaining position. Whether finalizing a financial deal or asking for a raise or promotion, a good negotiator must be able not only to present his/her position, but also to listen and use the power of the pause.

Spiritually, silence is understood as the language of the soul. Practicing conscious speaking is the first step towards inner silence. Being in conscious silence is the second step and meditation is the third important step for inner silence. Excellent communicators can allow silence when it's effective or called for. They are attentive to the need and uses of silence in a conversation.They avoid being pressurized into 'spilling' when silence is used to control. They understand and can offer silence as a gift or as a mark of respect. Their high emotional intelligence allows them to interpret silences of others and respond appropriately. Thus, silence can serve many purposes and functions both in our personal and professional lives. How you manage it determines your level of sophistication in communication.

Businesses today are operating in an interconnected globalized world. Experts advise; expect the unexpected to sustain and grow. Disruptive technologies, consumer demands, changing legislations all add to the complexity of the businesses and increase challenges for the business leaders. It is like a tumultuous ocean and has crashing waves. Yet like the sea, a place exists within us where we are calm and silent. How can we teach our management students to find this calm beneath the waves? To understand, interpret and respond to silences? Should our management education include silence as a tool of communication in our curriculum for effective communication? An interesting thought both to students as well as teachers!!

Authored by Dr Farida Virani, HOD - HR & Behavioural Sciences, MET-Institute of Management- Mumbai and a senior member of Higher Education Forum (HEF).

Reading room

Eureka!

Whatever your age, there comes a time, a moment where you are completely stripped of ideas. Some of us call it the writer's block or the more common artist's block, but you need to understand that getting ideas is not limited to artists and writers! We all need ideas all the time, and if that certain innovative thinking process to find solutions would not have happened, then India would not be famous for *jugaad*!

Coming to this book, author Jack Foster and illustrator Larry Corby have kept it simple, and yet effective. It is an ideal read for those who are struggling for concepts and feeling uninspired. But it is a great read for all, especially students. The aim of the book is to try to help you to break your routine and train your mind to think laterally and work on your inner creativity.

In fact, right at the start of the book, Foster points the reader is the right direction, by providing the definition of idea. He says, "It is 'a new combination of old elements." Often, we fail to look at it that way, since conventionally we are taught differently.

The advice offered by the book is simple: have fun, think like a child again, open your mind to new possibilities. Most of us do the same old things and think in the same old ways. Foster aims to help spot these patterns, then break out with tips and exercises.

The book provides great tools for generating you ideas. It is split into two parts. The first part covers 10 ways you can 'search for ideas.' The second part explains the five steps of how to get ideas.

1. Define the problem
2. Gather the information
3. Search for the idea
4. Forget about it
5. Put the idea into action

Since Foster has worked in advertising for a considerable amount of time, the experience he has is extremely relevant to the topic – that of generating ideas. This leads to him using real-life situations and instances as the backdrop to most of the chapters. The winning point is that he brings in historical references and quotes as well, and these are quite identifiable by the reader, owing to the internet.

Corby's illustrations are done with a great deal of fun, and provided a light-hearted view point to the reader. Needless to say, they enhance the reading experience of each topic.

So whether you are a teacher looking to inspire a group of students, an executive looking for solutions to an organisational problem, or a student looking to provide new angles in assignments and homework, reading this book would help!

How to Get Ideas
Author: Jack Foster, Illustrations by Larry Corby
Publisher: Collins Business/ Berrett-Koehler
Cost: ₹ 250

Sharma Classes
Near Central Cinema(Girgaum)
23691225, 23678861
Failed 7,8,9? don't worry
Pass SSC (Mum.) NIOS (Delhi)
Failed F.Y./S.Y. Save your year
Failed XI? pass XII this Year
Pass B.A. / B.Com
२५ दिनों में अंग्रेजी बोलना सीखें

News bites

IIT-B and Applied Materials to offer a certification course in Semiconductor Technology and Manufacturing

Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-B) and Applied Materials, Inc announced the extension of their partnership to offer a certification course in Semiconductor Technology and Manufacturing through IIT Bombay's Continuing Education Programme (CEP).

IIT-B faculty will deliver lectures along with industry professionals from Applied Materials. The lab sessions will be held at the IIT Bombay Nanofabrication Facility (IITBNF) and the Applied Materials Nanomanufacturing Lab, Electrical Engineering Department, IIT Bombay. On successful completion of the course, participants will receive the Continued Education Programme (CEP) certificate by IITB.

The CEP programme is intended for working professionals in the semiconductor industry, research scientists and technical staff, and academics. Register at http://www.cen.iitb.ac.in/cen/events/cep_course.php.

Carnival of Creativity

Maya Academy of Advanced Cinematics (MAAC) announced Carnival of Creativity event 2013 - 14 for animation aspirants across India. The event incorporates series of activities with scholarships to be won. Scholarships will be awarded to eligible students on long-term career courses in animation, multimedia, gaming and VFX. The different activities are:

- **Unreel -** November 30: An animation and VFX film fest where movies and their making will be showcased.
- **Bring it to Life –** December 2 to 12: A creative contest where the participants will be required to create something out of an inanimate object and make it look live by using props, painting, folding, etc. All entries need to be submitted at any nearby MAAC centre.

For details, visit www.maacindia.com/Default.aspx

Vocational training via distance education

Tally Solutions has partnered with Osmania University to provide vocational training to students through distance education.

As part of the collaboration, students undergoing the programme are offered a one-month long training, for which all the learning material will be provided by Tally. Osmania University will award them a certificate on successful completion of the course.

DETAILS:
Batches commence on December 7
Last date for submission of forms – December 5
Class timings: Saturday and Sunday from 9 am to 5 pm
Fees – ₹ 4000
Application: Download the form from http://www.oucde.ac.in
For details: Contact PGRRCDE, OU at 040-27098350 / 27097177 / 27091605

Learning programmes for working executives in India

Regenesys Business School, South Africa, is introducing a range of executive contact learning programmes for Indian executives. These programmes will enhance the skill sets of working executives and improve their careers. The programmes include:

- Digital marketing – December 9 and 10
- Project management – December 10 and 11
- Leadership, emotional & spiritual intelligence – December 16 and 17
- Professional business writing skills – December 16 and 17
- Financial management for non-financial managers – December 18 and 19

The programmes are ISO 9001 certified and offers executives easy access to global education. It gives applicants an opportunity to attend classes undertaken by global lecturers and business leaders and also provide easy availability of learning material.

Applicants can visit www.regenesys.in or mail to info@regenesys.in to enroll for the any of the programmes.

MET's media event

MET Institute of Mass Media invites you to its annual media event, METamorphosis 2013 from December 16 to 18. Based on the theme 'Between the Mind', there are 19 events, which include panel discussions, copy writing, Marathi street play, ad-making, creative painting and more, to be judged by media professionals. The last date for registration is December 14. For registration and queries please call 022 3955 4271/ 78; 97690 12810/ 97690 15530 or email metamorphosis@met.edu.

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2	Mechanical Engineering	9	5	1 SC, 1 ST, 1(NTA/NTB/NTC), 1 OBC
3	Automobile Engineering	5	3	1 SC, 1 ST
4	Civil Engineering	5	3	1 SC, 1 ST
5	Electronics & Telecomm Engineering	6	3	1SC,1ST,1(NTA/ NTB/NTC)
6	Physics	1		1 SC
7	Chemistry	1		1 SC
8	Mathematics	1		1 SC
9	English	1		1 SC
10	Applied Mechanics	1		1 SC
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Note:- For Detailed information about posts, qualifications and other terms and conditions please visit www.msbte.com and www.dte.org.in
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Last Date of Submission of Form : 30th November, 2013.
DGIPR 2013-2014/2837